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HENRY FIELDING

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JOSEPH ANDREWS & TOM JONES

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1707—1754

CHAPTER I

LIFE AND WORKS OF HENRY FIELDING

1. Parentage : Edmund Fielding, the father of Fielding the novelist, had served in the wars under Marlborough and had fought with a certain valour. He had married Sarah, the daughter of Sir Henry Gould, a Judge of the King's Bench. But she died when the novelist was of eleven, and Edmund given to gambling and other vices was allured to marry again. He married a woman of dubious extraction which told upon the material prospects of Henry Fielding. He was deprived of the allowance which his father had set on him, running into two hundred pounds a year, for studying law at Leyden.

2. The Aristocratic Background : The Fieldings had the aristocratic blood running into their veins. Edmund was the third son of John Fielding, a Canon of Salisbury, who himself was the third son of an Earl of Desmond belonging to the family of Denbigh. They were so proud of their blue blood because of their kinship with Hapsburg known for providing kings to Spain and emperors to Austria. From the material side we can trace the aristocratic blood of a Justice of the King's Bench and his cousin Lady Wortley Montagu.

3. Birth of Henry Fielding : Henry Fielding was born at Sharpham Park in the vicinity of Glastonbury in 1707. It was Sir Gould's countryside estate. The novelist was the eldest son of Sarah and Edmund.

4. Education : Henry Fielding's first tutor was Oliver, a parson which became the prototype of Parson Trulliber of 'Joseph Andrews.'

After his father's marriage with another woman he was sent to Eton where the atmosphere was much more bracing than that of the step-mother's home. There he attained a sound proficiency of Latin though not so much of Greek.

At Eton he picked up friendship with George Lyttelton, the prototype of Mr. Allworthy of 'Tom Jones'. He remained at Eton as a teenager. He passed some of his time with Lady Gould, his grandmother. There he developed a taste for law and read something of literature.

Fielding tried his hand in writing a play called *Love in Several Masques* and finding the profession not so paying joined the University of Leyden for studying law, but he had to leave the alma mater because his father withdrew the allowance which he had set on him. The novelist was compelled to write further plays, some comedies which met the scorn of the critics. For about a decade he kept himself bulled into the work of writing plays.

5. Journalism : During 1739—41 he piloted a journal called *Champion*. Later on he took up political journalism which caused him great misery but was ultimately rewarded with the assignment of Justice of the Peace for Westminster. In 1752 he launched another journal called *The Covent Garden Journal* writing under a pen name.

The last of his activity in this field was the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* which got published after his death.

His trenchent criticism of the political system of the day made Walpole highly indignant which resulted in the banning of his *Little Theatre* under the Licensing Act passed in 1737. It was a serious blow to his career as a playwright. His plays entitled *Pasquin*, a *Dramatic Satire on the Times* and *The Historical Register for the Year* 1736 had made Swift laugh which he had done rarely. These plays exposed the corruption of the day. With the coming on of *The Champion* he put up a renewed fight against the regime of Walpole. In November 1745 he launched another journal called *The True Patriot* in which he jerked the nation to cast off the torpor and do something against the corrupt government of the day.

The Jacobite's Journal was his another endeavour professing the same note of *The True Patriot*. This time he struck hard and broke the ground with his radical views. Ultimately his work was rewarded and his worth recognised

as he was made *Justice of the Peace for Westminster*. Since his legal equipment was sound he acquitted himself well in that sphere.

6. His Legal Knowledge : As we have seen before Henry Fielding read law at Lady Gould's place and studied it at the University of Leyden for some time. On finding some difficulty in maintaining his family he took to law and became a student of Middle Temple. The young barrister had to face trouble in this field, and he had to quit it in favour of political writings.

7. His Love Romances and Marriage : While living with Lady Gould he developed amorous relations with one Miss Sarah Andrew, a wealthy woman. He tried to elope with her but his attempt proved eventually abortive. The girl in question was married off decently with another person.

Henry Fielding married one Charlotte Graddock in 1734. She was so charming. It was also a case of elopement. She became the prototype of Sophia of 'Tom Jones.' She died in 1744. Fielding went into a paroxysm of frenzied mourning at the sad demise and Mary Daniel, his 'cook-maid', made up for the loss of his wife. She married Fielding after four years of her death. This wedlock created a furore in the family and Fielding's sister left the house in rage. However, Mary Daniel proved to be a good housewife. She was kind and gentle.

8. His Ill Health and Death : Fielding died in October 1754. Before that he was gripped by gout. In 1753 his health showed a considerable deterioration. It became exceedingly difficult for him to perform his magisterial duties. Since the climate of England did not suit him, it was suggested that he should seek a 'milder climate.' He left the country for Lisbon in Portugal and expired there.

The general impression that we gather from his life shows that his career had been that of a protracted struggle. The parental affluence left him in lurch. The political fight undertaken by him was constant and vigorous. His literary understanding was of a kind which not only created

a stir in that century, but blazed the trail of light followed by writers of the subsequent periods, a force which pierced through a history of novel writing which came in his wake and after.

9. **Works of Henry Fielding :** The following are the works of Henry Fielding (1707–54):

A. "The Tragedy of Tragedies or Tom Thumb."

B. "Pasquin."

C. "The Historical Register for 1736."

D. "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams."

E. "Shamela (?) 1741."

F. "Jonathan Wild the Great."

G. "A Journey From This World to the Next."

H. "Tom Jones."

I. "Amelia."

J. "Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon."

SUMMARY OF HIS WORKS

(*a*) **The Tragedy of Tragedies or Tom Thumb :** It is a burlesque of the playwrights of the age of Fielding. The enlarged edition appeared in 1731 under the title "*The Tragedy of Tragedies* ; or *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*."

(*b*) **Pasquin :** It is a satirical play, associated with the Licensing Act passed by the Walpole government banning Fielding's Little Theatre.

(*c*) **The Historical Register for 1736 :** It is also a satirical play associated with the Licensing Act banning Fielding's Little Theatre.

(*d*) **The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Parson Adams :** It was published in 1742. In this novel Fielding sought to parody Richardson's *Pamela* but got interested in certain human aspects.

The story relates about Joseph, the brother of Pamela who has to resist the advances of Lady Booby and her attendant Mrs. Slipslop. The man is dismissed from service and he proceeds to the village of his ladylove, Fanny. In the way he is robbed by the ruffians and is carried to an inn. There he meets Parson Adams. Henceforth they become road companions and undergo several types of adventures—odd and funny. The three characters Joseph, Parson Adams and Fanny along with Mrs. Slipslop and Lady Booby come to the country seat of Lady Booby. The amorous lady pursues Joseph persistently till the arrival of young Squire Booby who had by now married Pamela. He extracts Joseph from the clutches of Lady Booby. Ultimately Joseph is married to Fanny. There are other funny characters in the novel which make the novel spicy. They are Trulliber, Mrs. Tow-house and Peter Pounce.

(*e*) **Shamela :** The most famous skit of Richardson's *Pamela* is *Shamela* dubiously attributed to the authorship of Fielding. It appeared under the title '*An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*' (1741).

(*f*) **Jonathan Wild the Great :** It appeared in Fielding's Miscellanies' in 1743. It is a satirical romance written with a view to expose the true nature of greatness. In this book a rogue, baptised by Titus Oates arrives at the 'tree of glory,' the gallows. The hero becomes a rank criminal under the guidance of one Mr. Snap, keeper of sponging house. He becomes a pick-pocket. The book reminds us of Dicken's *Oliver Twist* published in the Nineteenth Century. Later on the hero becomes the chief of the gang of robbers, extracting a large booty from them, and dominates his fellowmen. The hero marries Letitia, the daughter of Mr. Snap. Further, he harasses his schoolfellow, a virtuous jeweller by the name of Heartfree. He is robbed by the chief of the gangsters and locked up by him. Ultimately the hero is foiled and exposed.

(*g*) **Journey from this World to the Next :** A Lucianic story by Henry Fielding. It appeared with other works in his *Miscellanies* (1743).

It is a satire describing the 'spirit's journey' in a stage-coach in company with other spirits. Their destination is Elysium. In this connection the judgment by Minos is significant for their getting admission there. A discourse by spirit of Julian follows with regard to several adventures.

(*h*) **Tom Jones :** It is a novel written in 18 books after the pattern of an epic. There is a prefatory chapter appended to each book giving Fielding's views on different aspects of art.

Tom Jones, the illegitimately begotten brat was discovered in the bed of Mr. Allworthy, a virtuous man of Somersetshire. The generous man educates him and the lad comes in clash with Blifil. He slowly grows up under the patronage of Allworthy. As a virile young man he has an affair with Molly Seagrim which incurs his displeasure. Further he is already in love with Sophia, daughter of Squire Western, a country side landlord. Thwackum, the tutor, is highly displeased with Tom Jones and he beats him mercilessly. Soon the conflict in the story arises in the marriage proposal of Sophia with Blifil. Tom sets out for travelling on the road. He meets a number of adventures in the way. He meets Partridge formerly the school teacher and now a barber. Later on Tom Jones finds himself enmeshed in the intrigue of Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar, but Squire Western saves the situation by rescuing Sophia at the opportune moment. Finally Tom Jones and Sophia get married.

(*i*) **Amelia :** It was published in 1751. This novel exposes a number of social evils. The story element, however, is weak. In this novel the writer attacks the law of debt, the evils prevailing in the sponging-house and gaols of the time. William Booth, a penniless officer, elopes with Amelia against the will of her mother. Their poverty-stricken condition, and the physical fascination of the heroine as well as the foolishness of the lover involve them in a number of odd situations. Booth falls in love with Miss Matthews in prison, but Amelia forgives him for his infidelity. The heroine herself is pursued by many amorous adventures. Their sufferings know no bounds. Suddenly

to their surprise they come to know that Amelia is a rich heiress. The book contains a number of other interesting characters in Dr. Harrison, Sergeant Atkinson, the Colonels, Miss Matthews and Mrs. Atkinson.

(*j*) **Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon :** It is an interesting account of his voyage to Lisbon where he died. The book was published posthumously.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND RISE OF NOVEL IN THE 18TH CENTURY

(A) Social Background in General

1. Fielding studied life with all its colours and shades : The social background of the novels of Fielding is the mirror of the conditions of his age. The life of the towns and the countryside have been drawn by him elaborately and graphically. London, however, has not been dealt by him with equal ardour. He himself had lived a life of diverse nature moving in different shades of society. His occupations have been of different kinds, and his sensitivity as an artist could imbibe the social spirit in its proper form. Digeon writes about his experiences in the following manner:

"He has a close and personal acquaintance with all classes of English Society. His residence in Leyden, his visits of London, where his father introduces him to life, his frequent journeys in the county, his profession as a lawyer, his trade as a pamphleteer, dramatist and theatrical manner, and finally his post as a Magistrate, all this furnish him with the most diverse human documents." At that time the Eighteenth Century England had 'passed from the reign of reason to the reign of sentiment.' In politics 'there was the magnificent revival of patriotism incarnate in the person of Pitt.' In the sphere of religion 'this era saw the birth of the great emotion of methodism'. Further 'the end of the century sees no more of these rationalistic controversies on religion which marked its first half. So the old laws, the old religion no longer satisfy.' Ethics was closely associated with the religion imbued with the theological spirit.

Fielding, however, is not swept away by the current ~~cial or religious mode. He feels the necessity of reform.

"When the Bow Street Justice becomes aware with the intellectual criticism which destroys institutions and beliefs has shaken the very bedrock of society, he feels the urgent need for a reform, which must be a sentimental reform, hence his examples, and hence certain pages of *Amelia*." (Digeon).

2. The Social Morality of the Day : Imagination apart, the social morality in the days of Fielding must have been at a low ebb. His two comic epics *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* mirror sexual morality in a blatant form. Removing facts from the heavy burlesque, at places, are shocking indeed. Both Joseph and Tom Jones find themselves hedged in conditions which unruffle the refined sentiments. We shall see for instance !

"Lady Booby went with Joseph to Hyde Park, pressed her hand at her bedside—these made no impression on Joseph. Lady Booby's subtle advances 'wicked design'. But Joseph would not imagine the least wicked design,"

Similarly Mrs. Slipslop made advances to Joseph but Joseph called her 'Mother' and she got angry. The bell rang when she had lain violently amorous hands.

In the same manner Tom Jones also finds himself in the meshes of Lady Bellaston and even in a subdued form with Mrs. Waters. The immorality depicted by Fielding pervades every strata of society. Tom Jones is the illegitimate son of Mrs. Bridget, sister of Squire Allworthy. Squire Philosopher is discovered at Molly Seagrim's place in suspicious circumstance, and the hero himself has a sexual liaison with the girl. What does it show? It shows that the morals of the people were loose, and the public morality at the lowest ebb. Even Fielding is not free from such a charge. Lady Montague uttered derisively 'feel rapture with his cook-maid'. His cook-maid Mary Daniel whom he married after the death of his wife was at that time 'three months pregnant'. There are reasons to believe the stigmatised social life of the days of Fielding, because according to Digeon he 'takes everything from life'. "The whole of contemporary England lives in his four novels with an accuracy of information which we can control by historical documents." The earlier works of Fielding 'show a picture of merry England which

went to the Beggar's Opera and rolled with laughter at its thieves'.

3. The Social Life of the Day : The persons belonging to the landed gentry in the days of Fielding were authoritative and typically eccentric. Squire Western is a specimen of that type of life who loves hunting and power in his own way.

People in general, as they appear to be, are scandal-monger and love to believe gossips. In the beginning of the novel this type of life has been painted so vividly. The social morality being at the lowest ebb has been described with the lurid touch by Fielding: "I should indeed have been highly offended with you, had you exposed the little wretch in the manner of some inhuman mothers, who seem no less to have abandoned their humanity, than to have parted with their chastity." How people readily believed about such cases and Jenny Jones Partridge became martyr to it. There was no dearth of 'sluts' in the age: "If the girl had been one of those vain trollops, of which we have too many in the parish." They were judged by their mode of fashion: "I saw two farmer's daughters at church the other day, with bare necks." Even a good man like Mr. Allworthy could not be spared by the gossip-mongers: "......for a whisper soon went abroad, that he himself was the father of the foundling child." Further, "Very grave and good women exclaimed against men who begot children, and then disowned them." The place of gossip 'is no other than the Chandler's shop, the known seat of all the news; or as it is vulgarly called, gossiping, in every parish in England.' Such was the condition of Fielding's England at that time.

The low metabolism of social life of that period has been expressed in several other ways by Fielding. How the pupils were treated by their tutors has been told through the presence of Thwackum in *Tom Jones*. Birch was all the mode in those days and the child psychology quite unknown as it appears.

The social background of the novels reveals a cosy life. Obviously the soot of the mill chimneys did not blacken the skies of England at that time. People had plenty of leisure

about them. The countryside inns were the places where they could get all for mere asking. The life of the inns has been painted so vividly by Fielding. The coaches, the coachmen, the position (a lad who hath been since transported for robbing a henroost) and the typical road life tell us about the peculiarities of Eighteenth Century social conditions. The days, medicos in those depended much on conjecture or the sham treatments and as such have been made to look ridiculous in our eyes. Such is the social background of the age of Fielding.

(B) Causes for the rise of Novel

1. The decline of Drama : The steady progress of novel, as traced out in the preceding chapter, was perhaps due to the fact that there was a steep decline in theatre during the earlier part of the 18th century. The drama no longer made any pretence of holding the mirror up to Nature. The drama, which had helped to satisfy the natural human desire for a story, was moribund. Thus something had to take its place. A Licensing Act was passed in 1737 as Fielding and others made an attack on Walpole and his ministers. Under these circumstances novel seemed to be the only major species of literature for catering the taste of the Public.

2. The rise of the Periodical Essays : During this age the seeds of the novel of character were laid in the Periodical Essays of Addison and Steele. In the pages of the *Spectator* was laid the foundation of novel of character. In the *Spectator* we also have the origion of the social and domestic novel. Since these papers were widely read, they cultivated the taste of the public for the future rise of the novel.

3. Ready material: By this time almost all the materials that were needed for the growth and development of the novel were ready. An appropriate prose medium, sufficiently pliable to clothe the ideas and sensations arising out of a larger social and individual consciousness had already been forged. Realism and romance, adventure and morality had been earlier introduced by Defoe and Bunyan, Mrs. Aphra Behn and Swift. It was now left for the 18th century

novelists to carry forward the trails that had been blazed by the earlier novelists.

4. Wider scope of novel: The novel was further developed because it provided a wider scope of treatment than is allowed by the corresponding form of the drama, for the treatment of motives, feelings, and all the phenomena, of inner life. The novel was the instrument in which the author could express himself thoroughly. As compared with drama, it was the most suitable medium for analysing the sentiments, and feelings of the inner life of man. In novel external life as well as internal life could be easily depicted and it was well suited for introspective and extrospective purposes. Naturally its appeal was greater than that of Drama.

5. The rise of the common people: The rise of the novel was also the result of democratic movement in eighteenth century England. Romance, like tragedy, made an appeal to aristocrats and left the common people untouched. The romantic adventures of Defoe had for sometime a vogue but they could not be very popular because the adventures were away from the ordinary social world. During this age a consciousness of the rights of the people began to come in the public mind and the novelist took advantage of this situation. Instead of going to the world of remote romance and arcadia, they began to deal with the life of common people and exposed the evils that beset society. The common men, finding novels dealing with their own problems and their own life, started supporting the novel of realism as was presented by Henry Fielding. Naturally as time passed on, the democratic feelings of the people and the democratic support of the Government made the novel popular. The country began to feel that the novelists were with them rather than with the old feudal nobility that was on the wane. This democratic consciousness gave a great support to the development of the novel. The rise of the middle class together with the democratic Government paved the way for the development of the novel.

6. No cramping limitations of Classicism : "The novel was a sign that literature was beginning to outgrow the

cramping limitations of classicism and to abandon the doctrine that modern genius was bound to go in the leading-stringes of tradition. In the epic and the drama it was impossible as yet that men should reject altogether the authority of antiquity. In the novel that authority could be ignored. There was indeed, as notably in Fielding's case, some discussion of technical questions from the classicist standpoint and an occasional parade of classical learning, but in general, the novel offered a fresh field, in which modern writers were able to work independently."

CHAPTER III

NOVELS AND THE NOVELISTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I

1. A brief history of the form of Novel before 18th Century.—The development of the English novel till Eighteenth Century is the history of many movements from romance to realism. Before the novels of Daniel Defoe saw light determining the tone of the novel proper there had occurred many things in the realm of the British fiction. The switching over from romance to realism is not a predetermined event but an accident caused by the psychological tendency of reaction. Before we come to sift and anaylse the Eighteenth Century novel it is necessary to cast a glance at the slow emergence of the form of novel, which at its back has the network of legends, mediaeval romances, a hero-saga, the tales of chivalry, the verse-tales depicting romance of adventure, the French fabliau and the Italian novella. The contribution of the Spanish romance, adventure and the rogue stories is substantial. The Spanish picaresque plays an important role in the history of the development of the English novel. Further, a bold line of demarcation has got to be drawn between the novel and romance. Cross in *The Development of English Novel* explains the difference between the two in a most vivid manner. He says : "The terms 'romance' and 'novel', which in themselves are a summary of the two conflicting aims in fiction, require at the outset brief historical and descriptive definition. The former is in English the older word, being in common use as early as the fourteenth century. Our writers then meant first of all by the romance a highly idealized verse-narrative of adventure or love translated from the French, that is, from a romance language ......Of stories of this realistic content, many were written in

English in the fourteenth century, but they were called tales. "Italians wrote novelle and they seeped in great number during in Elizabethan period and they were called 'novel'; the translation of the imitation of the Italian stories. Then came the 'history' which was something factual, something quite different from the fanciful romances." The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen." (Clara Reeve in '*The Progress of Romance*' as quoted by Cross in his *The Development of The English Novel*).

2. Forces in the Mediaeval Fiction : A wave of romantic movement set in the age of Norman England. The personality of the living great got cloaked with the haze of gorgeous imagination. Of such rank was King Arthur and the Round Table who got mantled with the romantic fancies. Further a hero-saga composed by Geoffrey of Monmouth appeared. It was written in Latin translated from Welsh (1139). The legend of King Arthur caught the romantic imagination of Sir Thomas Malory who wrote a book of prose-romance entitled *Morte Darthur* (1485).

The other contemporary tendency in the realm of romance was the verse-tales. It had the element of adventure about it, chivalry and adventure being all the mode of the time. England saw a great influx of the foreign forces which influenced and merged in the existing movement of fiction in those days.

3. The Foreign Forces : Among the foreign forces were the French verse-tales, the French fabliau and the Italian novella in prose. The Æsopian fable was also developed in that period. The minstrels had a hold over this literary genre and harnessed it for exposing the faults of the clergy. They 'gave a realistic touch to Arthurian fable'. Fiction came under the influence of morals. John Gower contributed to the then trends of writing in this direction. Further in Chaucer a vagrand type of fiction appeared, the poet being 'at will a romancer, or a realist'. He had different elements of fiction blended in his writings—the low intrigue, the fable, the adventure, and chivalry. He excelled so exquisitely well in the 'contemporary portraits'.

4. The Spanish Forces of Fiction : The English romantic trend, which had already imbibed the foreign influences, was stormed by the Spanish influence. It caused a considerable change in the trend already existing. It tended to provide romance, adventure, the pastoral imagery, grotesque behaviour, stories of tricks, the picaresque. One thing is noticeable in this connection that romance was set afoot on a realistic plane due to these trends of writing. Even characterisation got perfect under such writings. It took a definite shape. Humour also appeared in a new form.

Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia' struck a peculiar note in the writings of the day. Further, a famous romance of adventure entitled *Amandis de Gaula* became very popular. It redaction was made by Ordonez de Montalvo at the end of the 15th Century. *Arcadia* (1504) was written by an Italian called Jacopo Sannazaro. Even a pastoral romance in prose occurred in that period. It is known as *Diana* by George of Montemayor. Among the Spanish mediaeval stories the stories of tricks are important to note.

The Spanish picaresque played an important role in the history of the novel. A rogue story entitled *Lazarillo de Tormes* appeared in 1554. And at the top was *Don Quixote* in the dubious dates of 1605 and 1615. It sounded the 'death knell' of all romantic absurdities, and helped to raise fiction on a realistic level. Cervantes wielding a great influence made an impact on the future writings in the Eighteenth Century. Fielding came under his influence.

5. Romances of the Elizabethan Period : The poetic imagery reached its acme in the Elizabethan period. Among the forces found in that age are moral tales with pronounced didactic purpose the pastoral romances of amorous fancies, the tales of necromancy, the stories of adventure and the picaresque. The romances of Tasso and Ariosto caught the imagination of the people which came from Italy. But the note of reality was struck in that age by the appearance of Italian novelle which had 'as subject the interesting events of everyday life; others were of fierce incident and colour, and furnished Elizabethan tragedy with tremendous scenes.'

Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) is laden with the gorgeous romantic colours. The locale is surrounded with the most pleasing scenery about Wilton House. It is far removed from reality. It 'is an ideal creation'. Further 'the country it describes is the land of dream and enchantment, of brave exploit, unblemished, constant love, and undying friendship.' Cross says that in structure the 'Arcadia' is epic. As a conception of romance it is a crowning achievement.

It is natural that a reaction must set in against this romantic note, and it did. Some stories of 'robbers and highwaymen' appeared by way of contrast. One of the great rogue stories appeared under the title of *Jack Wilton* written by Thomas Nash. The book entitled *Lazarillo* de *Tormes* which was translated into English exercised a great influence in this direction. Another book entitled *Piers Plain* written by Henry Chettle also appeared. These were the comic writings of the period. The tragic in the same vein appeared in Greene's autobiographies—*Repentance* and *Groat's Worth of Wit*.

Incidentally history also came to be exploited in that age. *Thomas of Reading* by Thomas Deloney incorporating the picaresque element struck the historical note, a novel experiment. It is 'one of the earliest attempts of the modern story-teller to invade the province of history'.

The rogue story and the historical trend found in its wake the movement of style. The pioneer in this respect was John Lyly the writer of *Euphues* (1579—80). He proved to be a gorgeous acrobat in style in which 'alliteration, play upon words, antithesis' played a great role. This great puritan used art as a vehicle for the popularity of his moral sermons. He in turn influenced the writers like Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge. *Rosalind* written by Thomas Lodge breathes the same aroma of style which his master brought into play. The language is also over so ornate.

Arcadia had not yet lost its imaginative influence. It influenced the composition of *Argenis* (1621) in Latin by Barclay. The French romances written by Gomberville, La Calprenede, Madeleine de Scuderi and Madame la Fayette

came into existence and became popular. The big romance of that order is *Grand Cyrus* written by Scuderi. In this period we find the emergence of religious fiction, stories of adventure, moral essays and observations on politics. In this age both the romancers and the realists were using old material for their use. A realist like Richard Head gave a poor account of things in his 'wretchedly written' book entitled *The English Rogue* (1665—71). It contained an awkward sense of humour. But here is one thing significant to note that a writer writing in this vein sent his heroes on a voyage, and it is no wonder that Daniel sent Robinson Crusoe on a voyage afterwards.

6. A Significant Note of Realism: Mrs. Aphara Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) struck a peculiar note of reality. She was moved by a humanitarian impulse, and for the first time probably the human suffering came to lodge in the pages of fiction. The story narrates the tale of a royal slave kidnapped in Africa and put to death, with all the attending horrors, at Surinam. This slur on the civilisation has been severely lashed by her. At any rate it tends to open the doors of fiction on the new frontier of writing in which reality comes to play a significant role. She brought many writers for whom she had blazed the tail—Mrs. Mary Manley, Mrs. Eliza Heywood are the significant ones among them. Their writings came as a reaction to the French romances.

7. The Note of Morality in Fiction : John Bunyan, says J. B. Priestley, was not trying to write fiction, but to preach a sermon. He could successfully simulate reality in the characters like Badman; Faithful and Christian. The incredible was cloaked with a deceptive verisimilitude and he sent the fiction spinning in spite of all that could not be bëlieved, on to the ground. The language in which he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* breathed as aroma of 'simple and idiomatic English'. But the stuff which he gave to the people could not be easily swallowed by the fastidious literary people. They could drug themselves to dream of the imaginary romances, and the interest of the rogue and picaresque stories, but not digest the moral platitudes flung straight in their faces with all the edifying victuals served by him.

8. A Note on the evolution of the Themes and Materials: The themes and materials which became a grist for the mill of writings of the artists right from the Norman England to the days of Defoe evolved with alternate tendencies. The early ferments in fiction began with the legendary romantic haze enveloping the great personages like Arthur, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne. The hero-saga came into being. The prose romance came to incorporate the mythical ingredients. Chivalry and adventure emerged in a robust style. The fables and the exotic themes worked a change in the trends of the fiction of the day. Then the moral purposes of the minstrels struck a different note. Romance and realism came to be fused for a while. The grotesque adventure invaded the fiction and then it came to be relieved by the pastoral romances. But what influenced the fiction most was *Don Quixote* 'which is, perhaps, the best story in the world' as J. B. Priestley opines. Romance is forced down on to the realistic plane of life. It got buffeted by the artists like Charles Sorel, Moliere, Boileou who sounded the death-knell of the old romance. In the last realism and morality were the forces which changed the entire of fiction.

II

The writers of the Eighteenth Century are realists. Fiction comes to land from the highflown romance which gave free play to imagination and fancy. Daniel Defoe is the first novelist who flings the door of realism wide and reveals a world of human activity.

9. **Daniel Defoe (1661-1731)**: His strength resides in his major works. This writer, a kind of journalist, got his earliest work published under the title *Shortest way with the Dissenters* in which he recommends the annihilation of the entire dissenters. Does he not remind us of Swift's *Modest Proposal*, at least in it savage suggestion ?

In his later novels entitled *Robinson Crusoe*, *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, *Moll Flanders*, and *The Journal of the Plague Year* he shows his affinity with the picaresque school as well as his robust sense of realism. *Robinson Crusoe* has been called the earliest English novel of incident. He achieves 'the

complete illusion of reality'. This novel is much different from the picaresque school. The rogue is not roguish. On the other hand finding himself stranded in peculiar circumstances works terribly hard for survival. The novel has a message to give. The manipulations of the writer to achieve verisimilitude are superb and masterly. He employs all the devices to make things look recognisably real. His conception of the novel is based on the 'just history of fact' with 'no appearance of fiction' about it. The rogue hero has not to indulge in various antics of adventure. J. B. Priestley says about him that Defoe has the capacity to get into the skin of his fictitious narrators—Robinson Crusoe, Colonel Jack and Moll Flanders. The facts come to grip our imagination. The pleasure of recognition replaces the pleasures of sensuous imagery.

Memoirs of a Cavalier is a supposed autobiography. For long people remained in delusion about it thinking it to be real. "There is hardly any device for creating the illusion of reality that he did not employ, and employ successfully" (*The English Novel* by J. B. Priestley). It is a 'masterly piece of historical semblance'.

Moll Flanders is a novel with a rogue heroine: Her character in the light of her environments and heredity which makes her a sinner and a criminal has been studied in a great detail. The heroine has to struggle considerably to 'save her body and soul'. The writer holds under autopsy the underworld of London. The main material consists of the 'dregs of London—thieves and courtesans'. Defoe by incorporating this kind of sordid realism opens a new vista before the writers. Even in our modern times the books like *Liza of Lambeth* and the *Child of Jago* have been written though laying more accent on the social conditions rather than on adventure. Moll Flanders becomes a victim of the adverse social impact. The book is more realistic than picaresque. The turmoil of the conscience of the rogue heroine has been laid bare by Defoe.

The Journal of the Plague Year is highly documentary. It has a deceptive appearance of reality, a kind of historical reality. It gives the impression of one living in that plague

year. The public libraries 'still class it as history' though it is entirely fictitious.

Defoe, however, does not lay accent upon characters. The strange quirks of their temperament have been ignored by him, and there is not any trace of psychological probing either.

10. Samuel Richardson (1689—1761) : The novelist has three great novels to his credit : 1. *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, 2. *Clarissa Harlowe* and 3. *Sir Charles Grandison*. He adopts the technique of letter writing. This epistolary method is not, however, new. Before him there was a school of writers which after the Restoration depicted London life through imaginary letters to a friend. A volume of letters some two hundred and eleven was published in 1664 by Margaret Duchess of Newcastle. The letters breathed an aroma of the comedy of humour. After this the *Portuguese Letters* translated from French were published in 1678. These letters exposed 'the heart of a betrayed and deserted woman'. There were some letters of historical significance and they were entitled *The letters of Lindamira*, a Lady of Quality. It must have caught the imagination of Richardson while adopting the epistolary technique, which, however, was broadened by Fielding adopting an omniscient method.

Pamela is a 'mighty letter writer'. 'I have got such a knack of writing' she says 'that when I am by myself, I cannot sit without a pen in my hand'. Mr. B gets so much exasperated over this habit that he has to snub her a little by calling her a slut who minds her pen more than her needle. Richardson himself was a 'confirmed letter writer' who was asked by young women to 'correct or embellish' their love letters. He was also commissioned to write a *Volume of Familiar Letters* by Rivington & Osborn.

In Pamela the writer does not omit the hackneyed device of putting two letters in the wrong envelopes. Richardson shows a wonderful capacity of creating characters. The life like portrait of Pamela's father has been created so vividly by him. The heroine herself has been 'painted on a full size canvas not a feature slurred nor an eyelash omitted'.

The cult of details comes into being, and the thing which strikes us must is his capacity of probing into the soul of a woman. Pamela is not a surface character. She is held under an autopsy by the writer and that brings a new trend into literature, the tendency of studying feminine psychology.

Pamela has a close resemblance with Marivaux's vie de Marianne (1731—41). The device of autobiographical letters has been adopted by him. Richardson is superb while recording sensations.

In Clarissa Harlowe (1747-1748) there is 'no crass materialism in the motives commended'. The 'spiritual triumph' is her own reward. In this novel human emotions play an important role. It seems that Richardson becomes one of the precursors of psychological novel which in our own day plays such a dominant role. The technique adopted by him, besides being epistolary, 'historical and retrospective'. As a psychologist in fiction he is concerned with the inner feeling. He is most interested in the pathetic details of inner life. The writer is superb in registering the 'mental facts'. Hazlitt calls this genre of writing 'an artificial reality' which in his opinion 'is no where to be met with'. Further, on the moral ground the novels are 'an edifying treatises on conduct'. Mr. Cross calls *Pamela* a bourgeois comedy and *Clarissa Harlowe* a bourgeois tragedy.

Sir Charles Grandison is another novel by Richardson. In this book he combines all kinds of virtues. The man playing the prominent role is an assorted packet of manifold qualities. He is "compassionate humane, benevolent, kind to his family and friends, truth loving, steady in his principles, modest, courageous, unreserved, prudent, expeditious in business, manly, nobly sincere, amiable artless and handsome." Fielding reacts against such moral platitudes and becomes a founder of a 'new province of writing' laying down his own laws of fiction which comes to revolutionise the tone of novel in the century and open new vistas of writing for the coming progeny of the novelists.

11. Henry Fielding (1707—1754) : (Please see the

chapter entitled *Place of Fielding among his Contemporaries* in this book.)

He published *Joseph Andrews* in 1742 for purpose of parodying Richardson's *Pamela* and incidentally the parody recedes into background and other novel forces appear in the foreground. The 'comic epic' comes into being as a new province of writing.

Tom Jones was published in 1749. The novel in the words of Mr. Cross 'stands for the fulness of Fielding's art and manhood'. This comic epic in prose is a treatise on the diverse aspects of life. It has a psychological depth, and the panorama of life it reveals is simply breathtaking. In this novel Fielding maintains with greater artistic effect than the similar secret in *Joseph Andrews*'. Eschewing the epistolary method he adopts the direct omniscient method which gives a certain width to the novel. Relinquishing the hackneyed devices he compels our acceptance of 'his omniscience and omnipresence'. Further he works a big change in the locale of the novel. It spreads with an ever so wide a geographical panorama. As a realist he gives 'a complete picture of human life'. And the characters too are 'nearer to life than those in the fiction before him'. The thing which strikes us most is the reorientation of morality which ceases to be a blatant moral dogma but a natural living force.

12. Tobias Smollett (1721—1771): The noteworthy novels of this writer are (a) *Roderick Random*, (b) *Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* and (c) *Ferdinand Count Fathom*.

The novel entitled *Roderick Random* is a 'panorama of exciting horrifying or ludicrous incidents'. In this novel the horseplay comes to shake hand with 'macabre' realism. The characters are caricatures 'outlandish, violent and exaggerated'. Fielding called them 'monsters and not men' because he himself created characters with all human semblance and plenty of go about them. In him we also find 'the savage laughter of satirist' rather than 'the genial laughter of true comedy'.

His novel *Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* teems with farcical adventures, practical jokes and amorous escapades.

In this book 'absurdity and pathos melt into each other,' Baker comments upon the heroines calling them 'dummies'. But Smollett after all remains as a first class hand at recounting an incident, reproducing a scene or evoking in colours more vivid than life'.

His *Ferdinand Count Fathom* is a picaresque novel to its backbone. 'In it we find a thorough going miscreant instead of a 'genial rogue'. The picaresque tale gets merged into a criminal biography in the novel. What is noticeable in the novel is the new genre of writing which made a considerable impact upon the future novelists. The sense of terror forebodes the Gothic romance. But the novel on the whole remains 'as much a farrago and an awkward combination of old materials'.

13. Laurence Sterne (1713—1718) : He created a stir in the literary world by writing *Tristram Shandy*. "Sterne is a humorist pure simple," says J. B. Priestley. In this novel he found an outlet for humour. His satire has not been directed towards any particular object. There is hardly any action or story. According to Baker it has incidents but no events. The book is a 'huge improvisation'. It is also a picaresque, but not of the material objects. It has been rightly described as 'a picaresque of the intellect'. The critic comments calling it 'a rhapsodical work, a civil nonsensical, good humoured'. He also taps philosophy of time in it. But the hero is a 'nonentity'. The book has been more inspired by Rabelais than Cervants. Mr. Shandy is a 'motive monger'. The delight of the purest comedy has been derived from the characters of Uncle Toby and his brother. In the opinion of a critic the former is finer even than Parson Adams, and much finer than Dr. Primrose or Colonel Newcome'.

The novel entitled *A Sentimental Journey* is 'an exquisite symphony of sight, sound and feeling'. It is found to be 'exquisitely sensitive and delicately attuned'.

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CHAPTER IV

FIELDING'S PLACE AMONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1. Fielding brought a faithful transcription of life to Novel: Fielding holds a very important place among his contemporaries in the sense that he vastly succeeded in carving out a realistic novel based on the theories propounded by himself. Before the advent of the Eighteenth Century realism Defoe (1661—1731) had introduced an element of reality in his novels of incidents. At least the writer of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) could give a life-like portrait of a practical man. The nucleus of this novel can be traced to Dampiers *New Voyage Round the World* and *A Voyage to the South Seas and Round the World* by Captain Edward. The readers got the 'illusion of truth' if not the truth itself. But in Henry Fielding the faithful transcription of life became an accomplished fact—not an 'illusion of truth' but truth itself mirrored in his novels like *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. His realism has a social and personal flavour, a fidelity to life.

Defoe's 'history of fact' came with the deceiving 'no appearance of fiction in it', though the narrative was fictitious. He brought a new force of realism in the narrative of his prose-fiction, the sordid element pertaining to the underdogs and courtesans of London. But it lacked the psychological approach with which Fielding probed into the inner recesses of his characters. No doubt the realism of Daniel Defoe was of a kind which easily duped people into thinking that the characters introduced by him were real. *The Memoirs of a Cavalier* was for long regarded as an actual autobiography. It is 'a masterly piece of historical semblance', but Fielding gave something entirely new in his histories of persons with his epoch-making theories and the laws of the novel. Yet *Robinson Crusoe* remains 'the first nbvel in the complete modern sense' and it is also significant

to note that there is no woman in it. Defoe could attain a type of verisimilitude through numerous details. His *Journal of the Plague Year* has a documentary appearance, but it is fictitious. Fielding, however, could give something more, the nuances much closer to life. He differs in his themes and materials being a student of human character.

2. Fielding and Richardson : The sentiment preceded Fielding's robust realism. A London Printer had published anonymously the first part of *Pamela* ; *or Virtue Rewarded.* "It was structurally weak ; and its morality was questionable." In spite of the moral pretensions the story was 'salacious'. But the writer, *Richardson* proved to be a good student of feminine psychology. Fielding, who began with the parody of *Pamela*, came to have a better hold on life. He did something greater in the sphere of the novel. He showed that he had a much more comprehensive grasp of human nature. The story element in Richardson was not significant, but Fielding's genre admitted the predominant story element along with fine portrait gallery.

Richardson stands steeped in sentiments, 'the very morass of sentimentality', but Fielding revels in the 'coarse and hearty realism'. There is much of horse-play in the latter. Unlike Richardson Fielding succeeds in giving 'broad and fast moving panorama of life' in striking contrast to the 'slow-motion picture of life.'

In certain respects both the writer cover the common ground. They share a capacity to probe into human behaviour. They show, amazingly, the curiosity of a psychologist. Both of them share their love of realism. But Fielding surpasses his contemporary in several ways. His study of a character is more probing, He extends his psychological study to the male character also and acquits himself triumphantly well in that sphere. Moreover, his scenes of realism is much better in the sense that he could refine it. In Richardson the details were longwinded and unnecessary, but in Fielding they were judiciously eliminated under a selective process. This selection gives him a greater eminence as a novelist. Further, Richardson gives a hot-house atmosphere, whereas Fielding comes to "smash a few panes of glass and let

the cool air into that hot-house." The latter had a more advantageous position due to his being a writer of comedies. His close observation of life had given him that advantage over his contemporary whose concept of virtue flopped under the literary weight of Fielding. The new novelist occupying the lime-light of the eighteenth century had smashed the fondly embraced shibboleth of virtue which he had sought to present through *Pamela.* The morality conceived by Richardson underwent a sea change. The scene changed from 'doing' to 'being.' The change is a philosophic one. The reward of the innocence in this life became an object of mockery. The theatre of morality changed scene rebounding from the boards to the inside of person. It became largely 'subjective' in place of 'objective.' Thus Fielding comes to have a better hold on the moral concept and made his eminent contemporary look mediocre.

"The ridicule, boisterous and recklessly outspoken, made Richardson wince." The cut and dried christian dogmas were made to look ridiculous by Fielding. He was one novelist who had envisaged a new ethics radically changed from the stale one hugged to the bosom by Richardson. The latter was defeated on his own ground of morality, sentiment and in the conception of character.

But the importance of Richardson cannot be entirely dismissed in an off hand manner. The writer of *Pamela Clarissa, Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison,* however, moored the boat of his writings to the social peg. He succeeded in introducing the lower life.

In matters of technique also Fielding has got an upper hand. He introduced the omniscient method in place of the epistolary method. It freed the novel from the narrow frame of scope and made it romp on the larger praries of life. The epistolary method can be traced to a most amusing bundle of two hundred and eleven letters published in 1664 by Margaret Duchess of New Castle. "Her object was to transfer to letters, scenes and incidents that had hitherto been the material of the comedy of humour." It got a further impetus from the "*Portuguese Letters.*" They were written by a Portuguese nun to a French cavalier depicting

the tragic frustrations of one betrayed. Further the letters of Eloisa and Abelard were translated into English containing "a more pathetic tale of man's selfishness and woman's devotion." According to Cross *The Letters of Lindamira, A Lady of Quality, Written to her Friend in the Country* (Second Edition 1713) are of 'considerable historical interest.' But Fielding eschewed this kind of technique and adopted a freer one. It gave him an ample advantage over his contemporaries.

He also holds a unique place among them in the field of characterisation. In *Tom Jones* 'character and incidents are brought into equilibrium'. The incongruity between the two which was perceived in *Joseph Andrews* disappeared. In Richardson we come across the concentrated attention on a character whereas in Fielding we find a comprehensive grasp over the several nuances of a character. Even the 'plot take itself colouring from the characters themselves, as if both plot and characters were of simultaneous bith' (*Development of the English Novel* by W. Cross). The different shades of characters come tò jostle in the pages of *Tom Jones*. It was something more than the picture of feminine heart depicted by Richardson. It was now a picture of human manners on a comprehensive scale.

The characters of Fielding are more of individuals rather than the types. They throb with life and are rooted in the soil. Before him "the characters of the English dramatists and essayists were such placards as Vainlove, Fondlewife, Maskwell, Lady Touchwood, Lord Foppington, Ned Softly, Will Honeycomb." The characters of Fielding come to take part in the drama of life from various quarters and depict the multi-coloured soul "the manifestations of affectation as darkened by avarice, self-interest, deceit or heartlessness, and as softened by justice, mercy, courtesy, or generosity." The heart of a person was put under autopsy by Fielding.

Richardson is a rank conservative whereas Fielding is a novelist of liberal and generous impulses. He recognises the limitations of human nature, and paints his characters in that light. Further, he has an abundant sense of humour which puts out the glam Richardson, a formidable contemporary to

beat down. The former is also superior to the latter in a controlled sense of art. There is no verbosity in him of which Richardson is accused. He is above the glibly talked ideals.

3. Tobias Smollett (1721—1771) and Henry Fielding: J. B. Priestley in his chapter *The Eighteenth Century* of *The English Novel* has brought out a vivid contrast between the two. He says that Smollett has a 'lively talent' whereas Fielding has 'genius'. I think the latter has both. This point of difference elevates the position of the latter in the sense that genius comprises several essentials of a writer. The genius of Henry Fielding comprises of his faculty of probing deep into a human character, in delineating the picture of social manners which he has done so vividly in *Tom Jones*, in giving motives on which the actions of the characters are based and which lead us to judge them in a more liberal light and other accomplishments of a writer.

The second point of contrast brought out by Priestley is that Tobias Smollett 'works on the surface of life' whereas, as we know, Fielding probes deeper into the inner springs. But in several ways both of them share the same faculty, for instance both of them have "a sharp eye for oddities of appearance and manner", both of them have a "zest for the bustle of life" and both of them share their fondness for "adventure and buffoonery". But Fielding commands a better approach in the sense that he has a large element of comic too. He has improved upon the sense of burlesque and has elevated the tone of humour by incorporating the elements which if treated soundly may purge society of the ills.

J. B. Priestley says that the characterisation of Tobias Smollett is "superficial" whereas it is evident that the characterisation of Fielding has solid dimensions. He takes mental processes into account and the inner motives are adhered to by him.

The place of Fielding is superior to that of Smollett on the basis of his prudential deviation from the picaresque. He embraces a wider gamut of life, whereas the former keeps himself tightly riveted to the picaresque school. There are

also certain technical weaknesses in Smollett, for instance there is lack of plot in him, whereas Fielding's *Tom Jones* has won unique laurels from the discerning critic like Coleridge who sagely observes. "What a master of composition Fielding was !" "of the three most perfect plots ever planned".

In the shere of action Tobias Smollett lags behind the great contemporary. Action in Fielding has been broadly conceived and stands systematised as opposed to that of the writer of *Roderick Random*. The picaresque baulk his way in giving the planned action, whereas in Fielding we find it so well planned. There is a 'rambling action' in Tobias Smollett.

The figures of Smollett are 'grotesque' whereas the characters of Fielding are of flesh and blood. They are as 'vivid as our own aunts and uncles' a comment directed towards Dickens by a critic.

Both of them, however, share a sense of adventure. They differ only in depicting the picture of manners. The element of life is much stronger in Fielding. He could distinguish two different individuals in the basis of their motives and the mental make-up.

Both of them come to deal with the defects of human personality. Tobias Smollett deals in 'a world of spite and ill nature, envy, conceit and charitableness' and Fielding deals with 'hypocrisy, idiocy and selfishness, etc. Both of them acquit themselves well in their respective fields.

Fielding's sense of technique is superior to that of Tobias Smollett in the sense that he has grafted episodes only when required except in rare cases, but in the latter we find 'structures strings of episodes'. The episodes of Fielding are logically related with the advancing narrative, the *Man of the Hill* might be taken only as a sporadic instance.

Both of them meet on the ground of realism, but not in their shade. The realism of Smollett is 'macabre' in shade whereas the realism of Fielding is equipped with a quality of versimilitude.' There is a robust sense of realism in him.

As a satirist the strokes of Fielding are not lashing. He does not draw blood whereas Tobias Smollett lashes hard. He hits with a savage force, and in Fielding we only encounter the "genial laughter of true comedy". In this respect he has painted men and not monsters, whereas Tobias Smollett has painted monsters and not men. Though he could give us a 'most laughable story'. Both Scott and Thackeray, says J. B. Priestley, no bad judges considered *Humphrey Clinker* the most laughable story, though they do not come up to the standard set up by Dickens *Pickwick Papers* later on. "Dickens himself was inspired by his early acquaintance with these bustling chronicles, filled with wayside adventures and grotesque figures and a healthy boyish sense of fun. Indeed, for sixty or seventy years after Smollett's death, novels in his manner poured out from the press." Fielding has painted figures close to life and replete with social aroma whereas Tobias Smollett has painted 'caricatures, outlandish, violent and exaggerated'.

Thus Fielding's position as compared to this contemporary appears to be much superior particularly in matters of technique and in the conception of the novel. Both of them had, however, drew their inspiration from the Spanish source. The picaresque tales like Aleman, Cervantes, Quevedo and others along with their 'French offshoots' had filtered into English. In matters of intrigue, as Mr. Cross observes, and adventure both of them 'have much in common'.

4. Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne (1731—1768): Both of them differ in their approach of novel writing. There is a satirical touch in Fielding whereas in Laurence Sterne we find pure humour which is not satirical. There is plenty of go in the novels of Fielding as we may put it. On the contrary the novels of Laurence lack action and the story element. In this respect the former has an upper hand over his contemporary. Fielding is an excellent *recontour* and Laurence Sterne is not. It is due to the fact that in the latter we find 'huge improvisations' whereas the former is more factual in approach. Fielding takes large chunks from life. Further in Laurence Sterne it is said that there are

incidents but not events and in Fielding, on the contrary, we find incidents and events both.

Motion makes all the difference between the two. The picaresque in Fielding is concrete and dynamic. Life has been portrayed in a large flux of movement whereas in Laurence Sterne it is only 'the picaresque of intellect'. In Laurence Sterne we find the 'philosophical pretensions of time as influenced by Locke' and in Fielding no such pretensions are encountered.

Laurence Sterne expresses sentiments whereas Fielding gives something by way of rational thinking. There is a luxury of feeling in him, whereas the other takes to the brutal facts of life. It is said that Laurence thoroughly enjoyed 'a weep' and 'humour', Fielding mostly banishes tears from his pages. There is no 'obedience to the feelings alone' as we find in Laurence, on the other hand, he shows that the good impulses should be cultivated.

Conclusion: The above facts establish the superiority of Fielding among his contemporaries who wrote in a circumscribed manner. Even in the sphere of technique he rises much above them, so much so that he could lay down laws of fiction which leaves a blazing trail for the coming progeny of novelists. He eschews sentiments, broadens the canvas of his novels, probes deep into the characters and raises the status of fiction much above others.

Henry Mackenzie (1745—1831) and Oliver Goldsmith (1728—1774) do not match the variety and the social quality achieved by Fielding. Oliver Goldsmith, however, in *The Vicar of Wakefield* gives us 'an idyll, the benign comedy of simple domesticity and human charity, picturing a little household of blameless souls whose affection for each other and inward peace of mind are proof against the harshest shocks of circumstance" (Baker). Fielding stands at the top of all his contemporaries reaching the acme of literary perfection of his time.

CHAPTER V

FIELDING'S CONCEPTION OF NOVEL

1. Fielding a prophetic lawgiver in the realm of Novel: Fielding did not only burst as a novelist on the literary scene of his day, but proved to be a prophetic law-giver in the realm of fiction. In his prefatory chapters to 'Joseph Andrews' and 'Tom Jones' the two major novels of the century, he laid down his radical views on the novel. His conception of 'history' embraces both the personality of the hero and the social climate of the time. It sounded the death-knell of the remote and impossible romances and the smug morality preached by the writers. The writers who had written books of fiction before had nothing to do with the kind of realism introduced by Henry Fielding. They did not seek to present the actual life of the people, but Fielding did, though not with a certain tendency of exaggeration, a thing carried to a height by Dickens later on. Even in the Eighteenth Century the novel groped for fresh air and it was only with the advent of the writer of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* that 'a few panes of glass' were 'smashed' and the 'cool air' was let 'into that hot-house.' It began with the parody of 'Pamela' of Richardson, but the germination of the novel theories started fermenting in the mind of Fielding. His theories made the novels of his predecessors and of some of his contemporaries look like a stale slab of cheese.

The conception of his novel has in its fold different phases of fiction, a work of art. In its wide gamut we find the views of this law-giver on verisimilitude in piece of fictitious writing, human nature, craft, unity of time, the conception of hero and heroine, realism, supernaturalism, humanity, the accomplishments of a writer of a novel and the conception of virtue. I shall analyse the above constituents under separate headings. They are as follows:

2. The Realistic Tendency in a Novel : Henry Fielding in his *Book IV Chapter I* of *Tom Jones* writes : "As truth distinguishes our writings from those idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains." This note is, certainly epoch-making. It brings the English novel closer to life. This consciousness is well depicted in his Dedication of the book to his friend Houbli George Lyttleton. The words run in the following manner: "......and to say the truth, it is likeliest to be attained in books of this kind." The greatness of Fielding lies in creating a new genre of writing which has a recognisable aroma of life. Not only that there is also a surprising faculty of probing deep into the psyche of the characters he has drawn. The picture of society that he depicts is a faithful record of the time in which he lived.

He says that *Tom Jones* 'is really a copy from nature' and this saying at once lifts his writings to an elevated sphere of art. It distinguishes him from the writers wallowing in 'the idle romances which are filled with monsters' or indulging in the moral platitudes. His conception of novel is vigorously realistic. In his *Book VIII Chapter I* he says: "......it may very well be required of every writer, that he keeps within the bounds of possibility." The imitation of nature can guarantee this 'possibility', and it, really, does in his writings. It is due to this awareness that he comes to achieve the quality of verisimilitude.

3. Human Nature and its Variety: As a novelist one must perceive the wide variety in the world. It is one reason that novels of Fielding have a broad canvas in which the multicoloured humanity plays its role. In his *Book I Chapter I* he writes about it in the following words : "The provision, then, which we have here made is no other than Human Nature......that in human nature, though here collected under one general name is such a prodigious variety."

Fielding has the capacity to observe keenly the idiosyncrasies of the people. It is due to this that his characters seem highly individualised. Human nature is so unpredictable. A man is always abound by his innate traits. Field-

ing is a most astute craftsman who notices the 'motives' and the 'intentions' of the characters. Beneath the surface characteristics we notice the intrinsic personality of the characters, and they differ vastly from one another. As a realist, he has a keen eye for the 'true nature' which is as difficult to be met with in authors, as the Bayonneham."

Fielding is deeply interested in the human personality. "Man therefore is the highest subject......which presents itself to the pen of our historian, or of our poet." If we have to study 'Joseph Andrews' or 'Tom Jones' we shall have to study them as men and anything afterwards. Their personality have been presented in the meticulous details in spite of their heredity or environment. In Richardson's 'Pamela', we find a fine study of feminine psychology but his is a restricted scope whereas in Fielding it is much wider. He comes as a 'historian' of a human personality.

4. **Craftsmanship of a Novelist**: Fielding makes a significant comment in his *Book I Chapter 1* : "The excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing up." The remark gives us a vivid idea of his consciousness of the technique of an artist. The subject fades into background, and its artistic treatment becomes more potential. It all depends as how one attacks the subject.

5. **Unity of Time**: His conception of the unity of time in a novel is that it must be reasonably shortened and lengthened according to the necessity of the requirement. In his *Book II Chapter I*, he writes about it in the following manner: "We shall find some chapters very short, and others altogether as long ; some that contain only the time of a single day, and others that comprise years, in a word, if my history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly." This unity of time professed by him appears to have been rejected by the subsequent writers in later years. Jane Austen takes much less space of time for the execution of her work. The presentation of a novel is done, not in a rambling manner running into so many years, in a shorter space of time. The modern conception of time is extremely

short for which probably we can refer our modern classic called *Ulysses* written by James Joyce.

6. The conception of a Hero and a Heroine : It is not necessary that the hero of a novel should be of a high status or aristocratic extraction. The heroes like Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones belong to a lower strata of life. The latter is a bastard with a disreputable and dubious birth yet he embodies the essential virtues, though succumbing to the instincts of nature.

He observes in his *Book IV Chapter I* : "Thus the hero is always introduced with a flourish of drums and trumpets." This remark has been flung at the writers who were ignorant of the modern tendency, and those who belonged to the traditional school of fiction writing. On the contrary the heroes of Fielding appear in an illegitimately begotten style in 'Tom Jones' or as a footman like Joseph Andrews. It was a new idea, indeed, though not very new because Richardson had made use of Pamela, the servant girl as the prominent character in his famous novel *Pamela*.

Similarly the conception of Fielding's heroine is equally startling, though it is not necessary that she must belong to a lower stratum of life. Sophia is an extraction of a wealthy stock. The reason is not far to seek. He as it appears, is aware of the unity of contrast in this respect. He writes in his *Book IV Chapter I* about it: "Our intention, in short, is to introduce our heroine with the utmost solemnity in our power, with an elevation of style." The heroine must appear with 'solemnity' the device being so gripping. The elevation of style will lend a peculiar grace to the so deserving heroine.

7. Supernaturalism : Supernaturalism does not much appeal to the artistic imagination of Fielding. It is due to the fact of his being a realistic writer. He stands moored to the living social element of life and does not want to raise ghosts. In 'Tom Jones' he makes only a little use of it, and this little use of it conforms to his view on supernaturalism. He writes in his *Book VIII Chapter I* about it in the following words: "The only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns, are ghosts; but these I

would advise an author to be extremely sparing." And he has himself made a sparing use of the supernatural element.

8. **The Conception of Virtue :** He does not believe in a 'straitlaced' morality. His conception of virtue is essentially intrinsic. The apparent facade of virtue is most certainly deceptive. The so-called virtuous people often wear a mask of virtue and lack that moral fibre which is an inner quality in a person. Henry Fielding in his Dedication of the novel *Tom Jones* to George Lyttelton writes about it in the following words. "......for an example is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms". It must not be professed but must be expressed in deeds. The action of a person shall proclaim to the world about his virtue. Further, in his *Book XV Chapter I* Fielding writes about the concept of virtue in the following words : "There are a set of religious, or rather moral writers, who teach that virtue is the certain road to happiness, and vice to misery, in this world. A very wholesome and comfortable doctrine, and to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true." ......"By virtue is meant...a certain relative quality."

The conception of Fielding's virtue is strongly based upon the inner qualities, and it must not be contradicted by an adverse behaviour.

9. **His Conception of the various Aspects of the Novel : (i) Character :** He believes that in a novel the characters should belong to the lower strata of society with a picture of their manners. He says about it in his *Book X Chapter I* in the following words : "not to condemn a character a bad one, because it is not perfectly a good one." It is a revolutionary idea about the personality of a character, and surprisingly it is very prophetic too. In our time the writers like W. S. Maugham also are so compassionate towards the despicable characters. Fielding recognises the limitations of human nature, and thus his judgment upon a character depends upon the total behaviour and not one single adverse incident or act. In this connection we shall recall Black George of *Tom Jones*, who in spite of certain failings rises

much higher than the hypocrites depicted by him in that novel.

(ii) History of a Character : Henry Fielding writes in his *Book II Chapter I* in the following manner about his conception of history : "Such histories as these do, in reality, very much resemble a newspaper, which consists of just the same number of words." The status of a fictitious history of a man, or we may call it biography, is mueh higher than the chronicle of a particular period or the life of a historical character. He says further : "They may likewise be compared to a stage coach, which performs constantly the same course, empty as well as full." In the historical records of actual person there is hardly any scope for the play of imagination. It may lie cramped in a narrow and stiff frame of chronicled statements. But the history of a man like Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews there is ample scope for a free imagination. His conception of history, as stated before, embraces both the personality of the hero and the social conditions of the age. They differ from the actual historical record in their 'fable and action'. Instead of being 'solemn' they are 'light and ridiculous'.

The history of a hero affords the writer a complete and full survey of his personality inside out. It gives a writer an opportunity to probe into even the minor crevices of his personality. He can easily lay bare the psyche and the mental processes of his life.

"I describe not men, but manners," says Fielding, "not an individual, but a species." He in fact thinks that the character must be examined on all sides. Though his own characters cannot be called entirely round ones, yet it is surprising that they have been founded on the psychological bases.

(iii) The Essential Requisites for a Novelist : There are four essential requisites for a novelist in the opinion of Henry Fielding. They are as follows :

1. Genius, 2. Learning, 3. Conversation, and 4. Capacity to feel.

1. *Genius.*—He writes in his *Book IX Chapter I* about it in the following words : "......by genius I would understand that power or rather those powers of the mind, which are capable of penetrating into all things within our reach or knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences." The quality of genius in his opinion depends upon two essential factors, (a) invention, (b) judgment. "These are no other than invention and judgment ; and they are both called by the collective names of genius, as they are those gifts of nature which we bring with us into the world." Further he explains the word 'invention' which is synonymous of 'discovery' and 'finding out'. The faculty of invention leads a writer to penetrate into the nature of things with 'a quick and sagacious' approach into 'the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation'.

The conception of genius is something more than the heavenly gift bestowed by providence upon a man. It is more functional in its nature. It is a strong mental faculty which discerns the 'essential' from the ordinary. Objectively it is an intellectual brilliance and subjectively it is capacity to apply this greatness of mind upon the thing concerned.

In his *Book XII Chapter* I Fielding envokes the spirit of genius "Genius ; thou gift of Heaven ; without whose aid in vain we struggle against the stream of nature." For a writer it is indispensable and it is also not an acquired thing. Since it is a 'gift of Heaven' it must be something inborn. It is only learning which can be acquired.

2. *Learning.*—Nothing can be attained without a 'good share of learning'. It is only 'learning' which can 'fit them for use'. But the concept of learning is not comprehensive in its scope, though can be called comprehensive in its approach. There are only two subjects which are recommended by Fielding to be studied for becoming a writer : (a) A competent knowledge of history and (b) the belles letters. Genius must remain ineffective without the support of learning. Fielding in his *Book XII Chapter I* An Invocation says "And thou O Learning ! (for without thy assistant nothing pure, nothing correct, can genius produce) do thou

guide my pen." Learning, is indeed, a guiding force for a writer.

3. *Conversation.*—In his opinion he must be conversant with the universal traits of the characters which he wants to portray. The writer is naturally a 'historian' in his opinion, because Henry Fielding himself has written histories, the life studies of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. Thus the historian must have a 'universal' acquaintance with the characteristics of a person. He writes in his *Book IX Chapter I* "......This conversation in our historian must be universal, that is, with all ranks and degrees of man ; for the knowledge of what is called high life will not instruct him in low." It is a very significant note sounded by him. The study of an underdog of society comes to have a great importance where the functions of a writer are concerned. The study only of the rich is insufficient and inadequate because "the effectation of the high appears more glaring and ridiculous from the simplicity of the low." In order to have the neccessary material for a writer his rich experience of life is valuable. This he envokes in his *Book XIII Chapter I* "Lastly, come Experience, long conversant with the wise, the good, the learned, and the polite......from these alone can the manners of mankind be known."

4. *Capacity to Feel.*—The strong sensitivity to feel is one of the requisites of a writer. He says in his *Book IX Chapter I* : "be capable of feeling......The author who will make me weep, says Horace, must first weep himself."

A writer who happens to be callous may not succeed in his efforts. It is absolutely necessary that he must be gifted with the quality of feeling which can be transmitted in an artistic manner to the readers.

5. *His Conception of the Story Element.*—Henry Fielding says in his *Book IX Chapter I* : "to invent good stories and to tell them well, are possibly very rare talents." He makes a distinction between a 'novel' and a 'history'. He does not think much of novel writing. He says about it in the following words : "Whereas, to the composition of novels and romances, nothing is necessary but paper, pens

and ink, with the manual capacity of using them." On the contrary the task of writing 'history' is something arduous and of a higher order. It is rarely a good story can be told. It is necessary the writer must be a gifted person and accomplished with all the qualities described before.

From his point of view the ancients had a greater advantage over the 'moderns'. He writes about it in his *Book XVII Chapter I* : "The ancients had a great advantage over the moderns. Their mythology......gave them always an opportunity of delivering a favourite hero......The Arabians and Persians had an equal advantage in writing their tales from the genii and fairies." It seems that he considers the efforts of the writers to write with an eye on society much more difficult than those who had not to grope for a theme or material.

Further he has a strong faith in the entertaining value of a work of art. Sermonizing is repugnant to his taste. His statement in his last *Book XVIII Chapter I* is significant from this point of view :

"If I have been an entertaining companion to them, I promise that it is what I have desired."

A writer must necessarily be entertaining. He must grip the imagination of his reader and move his mirth.

The epoch-making observations of Fielding tend to revolutionise the entire concept of a novel. His idea of history checks the reckless flight of imagination. The material of a novelist is that of earth, more particularly that of society. 'Man' is the proper subject for his study. The approach is more anthropological than fanciful or mythical.

In this connection it would amuse us to note his ire against the critics in the realm of literature. He says in his *Book V Chapter I* : "The critic, rightly considered, is no more than the clerk, whose office it is to transcribe the rules and laws laid down by those great judges." He bursts into an impotant rage on finding these clerks becoming 'the legislator'. In his *Book X Chapter I* he condemns them as "a little reptile of a critic" and does not approve of the idea

that he must condemn a writer 'without mercy'. In his opinion he well deserves the nomenclature of 'a slanderer' one 'who reads with the same malevolent view, be as properly styled the slanderer of the reputation of books.' Not being content with this he observes furiously "not the devil receive a guest a more worthy of him." Further, he has used a more vituperative language than this which in the interest of decency would not behove me to write in this chapter.

His conception of *comic epic in prose* is, certainly, unique. It must of necessity have a large section of society. Life must escape from its narrow frame to inhabit under this large canopy. The comic epic poem in prose must reveal the social mores, the aspirations, and tendencies of all kinds of people. Henry Fielding does it with credit in *Tom Jones*. In it he portrays the English society of the time. All kinds of people, except royalty, jostle in his pages. Since it is comic it must have that element of humour in it, and so it has in it in abundance. Fielding has an amazing knack of catching the essentials of human personality and makes capital out of it. The lower strata of society furnish him with the necessary material for the purpose. The rollicking humour emerges spontaneously from the characters whose lives are like open book. An underdog reveals his self better than a prince because he is much more himself and does not bother to conceal his idiosyncrasies.

The comic epic poem must differ from the serious epic. He says about it in the following words :

> "as the serious epic from tragedy : its action being more extended and comprehensive containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this, that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous ; it differs in its characters, by introducing persons of inferior rank, and cosequently of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us ; lastly

in its sentiments and diction, by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime."

Tom Jones as a comic epic poem in prose is extremely interesting, revealing and humorous. The canvas of the novel is as large as life itself.

Fielding as a theorist has novel views upon writing. To him the 'ludicrous' is of more value than 'sublimity'. In his theory of the ridiculous vanity and hypocrisy are the sources of humour. There is a distinction between the comic and the burlesque. The latter in his opinion is associated with the 'monstrous and unnatural'. It is remote from nature, whereas in the former there is always scope for adherence to nature. The comic may exist in the copy of nature. It is potentially realistic as compared to the ludicrous. In his work he eschews the latter and embraces the former according to his own version, but actually he has not been able to do so with a pronounced distinction between the two.

The conception of the novel of the writer sought to make radical changes, and he succeeded in his efforts in the sense that he brought about an effective change the force of which created a lasting impact on the progeny of writers to come, though fiction ramified in so many diverse schools. Fielding as a theorist stands on the buffer state from the marked distinction between the predecessors and the coming generation of the writers.

CHAPTER VI

FIELDING'S CONCEPTION OF MORALITY

The new ethics of Fielding is based upon the right human conduct which is to be judged by the 'higher motives'. He severely reacts against the cut and dried Christian morality. If the motive is good nothing else matters. The type of morality preached by Addison and Richardson did not suit his temperament. His is a philosophical ethics, the personality of a man assessed in the light of the same. In this chapter we shall examine the validity of his conception of virtue, the position of morality according to his view, the contempt of the Christian dogmas, the sexual morality, the play of instinct as related to morality, the intrinsic morality, magnanimity of human soul, motive as foundation of virtue, the savage aspect of human life, and a new moral standard established by him.

1. The Conception of virtue : The moral theorems hugged to his bosom by Richardson are looked down upon by Fielding. He reacts severely against the conventional morality. "Richardson stepped forward to give the people example of right conduct and to add a moral code. Fielding followed him, first to ridicule him, with the license of Harlequin, and then to criticise him in sincerity." Fielding in his *Book XV* (*Tom Jones*), *Chapter I* observes about virtue in the following words : "There are a set of religious, or rather moral writers, who teach that virtue is the certain road to happiness, and vice to misery, in this world. A very wholesome and comfortable doctrine, and to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true." This observation reveals Fielding's strong aversion against the commonplace doctrines which mislead people. The scope of true morality lies elsewhere.

The concept of morality is not absolute, it is relative. "By virtue is meant a certain relative quality." It has got to be judged in context with the nature of motive. "Try to see into yourself, do not stop at the moral or immoral appearance of an action......go deeper than words and judge deeds and judge intentions which are the immediate expression of the soul, go deeper even than the conscious intentions." The cheap doctrines of morality have been 'pushed to the ludicrous' by him. Virtue must not be a museum piece, but a practical way of life. In his Dedication to George Lyttelton, Esq., he writes : "......for an example is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms." He says further about it in the same Dedication : "For this purpose I have shown that no acquisitions of guilt can compensate the loss of that solid inward comfort of mind, which is the sure companion of innocence and virtue." It was Fielding's storng belief that it was easier to make good men wise rather than to make bad men good.

What then is the reward of virtue ? It is here on this earth and not hereafter. Fielding believes that it promotes peace, the mental peace which is a boon for a man. On the other hand vice tends to create a 'disturbed conscience', and there cannot be any punishment greater than this.

2. The position of Morality: Wilbur L. Cross has observed with a great precision about morality in his book entitled. *The Development of the English Novel* in the following words: "......the point of view has shifted from the objective to the subjective, from doing to being, and the shifting means war against formalism." Thus the conception of morality changes position. It gets inward in the human personality. It is no longer an object highly idealised but an object of 'sight' expressed by the person who is moral.

'Doing' is no criterion of the moral strength of a man, but 'being' is. Mere act cannot be called moral till it is expressed by the inner personality of the doer of an act. Fielding's new ethics is based upon it, hence he comes to wage a war against those who indulge in moral platitudes.

Richardson comes so handy to him for about. His 'Pamela' becomes 'Shamela' and the subsequent parody in *Joseph Andrews* is result of this new idea.

3. The contempt of the Christian Dogmas : Fielding scoffs at the blatant preaching of morality. It is not only difficult but impossible for one to conform to the standardised biblical dogmas. He could not shut his eyes against the presence of dual elements residing in the same breast of human personality—virtue and vice. Though it is an admitted fact that there is always the preponderance of one element over another which determines the entire tone of his personality. Fielding is always aware of the limitations of a person, the human limitations. Occasionally even the sexual lapse is taken as something natural and instinctive and the moral fibre of a person is not stigmatised on that ground.

It is pity that even a man like Dr. Johnson could not see the underlying morality in his 'Tom Jones.' He condemned the novel as 'a vicious book' saying "I scarcely know a more corrupt book". It was Gibbon who could see the real worth of *Tom Jones* when he commented "......that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the house of Austria."

The smug morality of the people fondly preached by some of the writers stands defied by Fielding. "Fielding's protest against the letter of the law, and point to the fact that with '*Tom Jones*' the novel not only definitely assumes a new form, but a new ethics much more respectable than that founded upon utilitarianism and formulated in beautiful and edifying maxims". The cudgel taken by him against the conventional morality made people blink. He changed the map of the then morality.

4. The sexual morality : His belief in the instinctive urges is strong. His hero, Tom Jones, in spite of his being so generous and good gets entangled into a sexual affair with Molly. His intention was not bad and so was his motive. The conduct of Tom Jones is in no way blameworthy, though a conventional Christian moralist would hang him for it. Fielding does not follow a moral dogma, he analyses the

nature of motive and the entire personality of his hero. His sexual lapse is so shocking to a reader of the book, but then he moves on to win fresh laurels from us for his noble deeds. The whole thing is forgotten like a bad dream, of something which is most likely to occur in a person who has attained puberty. Further, he has the moral courage to own this lapse.

Fielding's awareness of the forces of instinct operating in a human being gives a unique shade to his conception of morality. It was surmised that Fielding had incorporated his own moral perversions in the characters drawn by him, but the critic exonerates him from such a gross charge levelled against him by saying "he was a faithful husband and father; even the widespread impression that he was 'wild' in his youth rests on general probabilities rather than specific evidence." Fielding does not recommend the sexual vice anywhere, but he recognises it as an inevitable part of human nature. A man in this respect shares the 'animalism' of a reproductory living organism. Despising the conventional morality he gives the due allowance to a sexual lapse in a human character. Tom Jone's affair with Molly can be cited as an instance in this respect. Elsewhere he stoutly defends himself resisting to fill the sexual overtures of female characters like Mrs. Waters and Lady Bellaston. Walter Allen observes on the sex behaviour of Tom Jones in the following words : "It is not that Fielding approved of Jone's sexual conduct but he did believe, with many excellent theologians, that other sins were graver than sexual irregularity, among them malice, cruelty, meanness, hypocrisy." If there is a good nature in a man nothing else matters. Fielding's sex morality is a new experiment which might have been misunderstood by the prudish folks of the day. He is not the type of novelist to ignore this potential part of human personality. As a realist he gives due place to it. The picture of society with all its denizens is a complete picture wherein he includes even the savage side of human life. Sexual lapse is not a fell moral disease in his eye. It is a sign of health. It has been noted that Dante too regarded 'fornication' as 'the least among the mortal sins'.

For illustrating his thesis he proceeds by contrast. Tom

Jones has been pitched against Blifil. The former is well equipped with good-nature and latter represents the conventional morality. The former remains a good man inspite of his moral lapse, and the latter fades into an undesirable person inspite of his adherence to prescribed moral code. Mere idealism is hollow. The healthy morality requires that a man must be premitted to express his personality to the full. It is only the motive which determines the nature of human conduct. The basis of morality rests upon the nature of intention, and if it is pure nothing can pollute the human character. Fielding is as great a moralist as Richardson is, nay more honest than him. Allen observes in his *The English Novel* in the following words : "Both Fielding and Richardson were moralists and used the novel in order to demonstrate by actual examples what they considered right and wrong behaviour. But their conceptions of moral were poles apart ; indeed, each thought the works of the other anything, but moral." In this connection one may decide that Fielding surpasses Richardson in the sense that he founded a new school of morality which embraces a liberal outlook on life.

5. **The essential good nature :** Fielding stands for the natural goodness of 'heart'. The concept of morality in him is different from the so-called morality. Unlike Richardson he is a liberal moralist recognising the value of everyday good behaviour. His morality is not of the scholastic type. He makes the mere abstractions of the philosopher Square and Thwackum look mediocre and meaningless.

There is nothing like perfection in human nature. Even a good man is likely to fall prey to the instinctive and other temptations. He has got the right to be judged on the basis of his essential goodness. A man is a bundle of diverse traits—good and evil. Fielding does not have an eye on the ideal but on the real, and the real must give due allowance to certain inevitable weaknesses in a person. In spite of the presence of sexual lapses in his characters he cannot be accused of obscenity. He is only an avowed enemy of prudery.

His conception of virtue embraces the essential good nature in a person and generosity. Altruism is one of the

virtues which Tom Jones practises abundantly. Further he prevents others from harm. The motive involved in his behaviour is pure, hence he cannot be dubbed as an immoral being in spite of his sexual lapse.

He has got power and courage of conviction, the two glowing virtues in him which at once elevates his character. Walter Allen remarks that Fielding considered sexual irregularity a much less offence than the absence of essential goodness in a person. The positive evils like malice, cruelty, meanness and hypocrisy are the worst offences for which a man must be condemned.

Fielding's conception of virtue is construed by him in terms of the 'delight in doing good'. Example is better than precept. Tom Jones can be cited as one who shows by his personal deeds the good moral behaviour in life. Thwackum fails because of his abstract sermonizing and lack of essential goodness of heart.

"Emotions and impulses cannot be relied upon as infallible guides in conduct," says a critic. The approach must be rational. The positive virtue lies in human magnanimity and altruism. The Christian dogmas prescribe only the ideals much difficult to be practised by men of flesh and blood who are prone to commit mortal sins. Good nature is an inherent quality and much commendable if put into actual practice. Baker observes about Tom Jones's morality in the following words. "The general draft of the lesson to be conveyed is plain from the foregoing summary. It is that the best qualifications for making a success of virtue, prudence, and willingness to learn by experience even at the cost of suffering for our mistakes. By acquiring wisdom and better knowledge of mankind, Tom Jones who has the right personal endowment, learns how to live and how to be happy. It is his nature to be open and unsuspicious. He falls an easy prey to temptation and quickly repents. He becomes a sinner, but never a villain."

In accordance to the conception of morality the virtue must be duly controlled by 'prudence' and 'circumspection.' It is necessary that the gifts of good nature be pruned

properly so that they may conform to the perfect social behaviour.

It is significant to note that in the discussion between Square and Mr. Thwackum nothing like 'goodness' is ever mentioned, yet it is goodness alone which matters in the personality make-up in a character like Jones.

6. The New Ethics : The vista of new ethics opened by Fielding surprises us a great deal. Even the great critics have erred in judging the quality of morality in Fielding, the reason being that his morality remains latent and not manifest in his writings. Dr. Johnson condemns Fielding's *Tom Jones* as 'a vicious book' and a 'corrupt book'. Byron calls the hero of the novel as 'an accomplished blackguard'. Thackery opines in the following manner ; "I can't say that I think Mr. Jones a virtuous character; I can't say but that I think Fielding's evident liking and admiration for Mr. Jones shows that the great humorist's moral sense was blunted by his life' and that here, in art and Ethics there is a great error." These critics, evidently, were mislead in their opinion against Fielding. But the other discerning critics exonerate him from the charge of immorality by pointing out the essential goodness in the hero and the ethical treatment of Fielding in his novels. Sir Walter Scott considers Tom Jones as "a model of generosity, openness and manly spirit". He also says that it is the first English novel which has been founded "upon the plan of painting from nature".

The conception of new ethics of Fielding is revolutionary and radical in character. The 'mawkish ideals' are his abhorence. He does not believe in the forced note of morality, but considers it as a practical social behaviour which does positive good to others. Scott, one of the defenders of the writer, says about him: "We treat with scorn that affection which, while in common life, it connives at the open practice of libertinism, pretends to detest the memory of an author who painted life as it was, with all its shades, and more than all the lights which it occasionally exhibits to relieve them." Raleigh too denounces the formal morality which would consider the smug hypocrisy and

villainy of Blifil as being superior to the good-heartedness of Tom Jones with all his numerous lapses. The ethics is robust and healthy and does not admit the hot-house atmosphere.

Digeon has analysed the new ethics with great precision. The 'great emotion of methodism saw light in the Eighteenth Century but the concept decayed later and the old laws and the old religion did not satisfy the inquisitiveness of the writers. Ethics could not be separated from religion. The 'moral standard of Christ' comes under autopsy of Fielding and criticised because its being so sentimental. He probes deep to plumb the truth which lies beneath the apparent: "The prudish Pamela may be an artful minx, the virtuous Blifil a rogue, and the Square a moralist and a hypocrite." The new ethics of Fielding has been riveted to the motive, and virtue based on it. How difficult it is 'to recognise the actual beneath the apparent motive for an action'.

7. **Motive as Foundation of Virtue :** Fielding 'shocks the traditions of decency of morality'. It is necessary that one probed deep to find the motive actuating the behaviour of a person. Tom Jones is not immoral because in him the motive for an action is never vicious though it is a 'comic error' that he is sometimes afraid of his being in love with his own mother as he thought, and Joseph betrothed to his sister. Even the Molly scandal did not perturb him because it was a circumstantial lacuna on his part and not an act of villainy. The uprightness of motive distinguishes his work from the "immodest romances, printed in images of virtue, profane stories, idle histories destructive to the minds and morals of the age". Fielding is against the 'perpetual affectation of virtue'. Richardson's 'Pamela' is a salacious tale in spite of his pretensions of making it a moral one, the edifying novel. It is due to motive that Tom Jones, in spite of lapses, remains physically and morally vigorous. Similarly Adams in *Joseph Andrews* 'believes in all good faith' and has the 'inoffensive disposition of his own heart'. He 'teems with goodness'. He 'carries beneath his rags a beautiful soul and a courage superior to his fortune'. As a moral being his 'religion is broad'. 'He is a clean vigorous

Christian, with a Christianity which pays less heed to pure dogma than to active sympathy for the weak and disinherited of the world.' It is the motive which determines the nature of an evil act. Even Mrs. Slipslop "having made a small slip in her youth, she has continued a good maid ever since." Yet her foible does not condemn her to go to hell or purgatory. The strait-laced morality is condemned by Fielding. Motive is the criterion for an act to be judged. But "he seldom admits of an apparently generous action without showing its alloy of selfish motives". (*Hours in a Library* by Leslie Stephen). A moral action is often 'a mere cloak for selfish motives'. "Society", he says, "is as moral as it ever was and given more to frivolity than to vice". Leslie Stephen calls the morality of Fielding as a "homespun morality". Fielding, however, 'believes in good heart, but scarcely in very lofty motive'. He is a moralist in the style of a realist.

CHAPTER VII

FIELDING'S HUMOUR, IRONY AND SATIRE

The play of intelligence is found in the irony of Fielding, and it is often very sharp. The comic spirit pervades the entire fabric of his *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*. His novel *Jonathan Wild* has been considered as 'the greatest work of irony'. The range of his humour extends from the gentle mockery to the horseplay. In spite of his distinction between comic and burlesque, the latter does find its presence in certain situations. There is an element of exaggeration in him though not of the stature of Dickens in the Nineteenth Century. Before we come to sift irony, satire and humour in this chapter it is necessary for us to understand the terms involved in it.

1. What is Humour and Irony : According to Stephen Leacock humour 'at its highest is the interpretation of life'. The medium of comic while evoking our mirth leads to hard facts of life. This medium points out a defect or shortcoming in a laughable manner. Priestley says that humour is 'thinking in fun while feeling in earnest'. It flourishes best on the incongruities of life. The absurdities of people make us laugh. We can laugh only at somebody's cost. But at the same time we are compassionate. We do not take a cudgel against him, but simply point out a certain lacuna or defect in him. Often humour soars high from the ridiculous to the sublime. There is always a tragic element in the womb of humour. Leacock says that the first humorist was the savage who cracked his enemy over the head with a tomhawk and shouted Ha, Ha. Humour and satire can be distinguished in the sense that the former is sympathetic and the latter has a touch of derision about it. It is rarely that a humorist is both satirical and compassionate. The humour of a caricaturist has been described as 'the charge of the bull'.

Prof. Mudrick while dwelling upon irony points out "the incongruities between pretence and essence, between the large idea and the inadequate ego. Here indeed, irony becomes for her (Jane Austen) a positive agent and appears as the only interpreter of life". It points out the distinction between form and fact in the incongruities. According to Andrew H. Wright irony lies in "a world view, as the juxtaposition, in fact, of two mutually incompatible views of life". Prof. Chevalier points out in his *The Ironic Temper Anatole France and his Time* that "the basic feature of every irony is a contrast between a reality and an appearance". Prof. Mudrick says that irony draws no conclusion.

Irony and humour are closely allied. An ironist, says Saintsbury, is almost inconceivable. Whereas the former shows different shades of emotions and feelings like compassion, disgust, laughter, disdain, sympathy or horror, the latter shows compassion.

Satire is more specific than irony and humour. It carries a certain bitterness or the lethal sharpness. It often manifests derision. The satire of Jonathan Swift is sharper than the blade of a knife. It is born out of indignation.

2. Sources of Humour in Fielding : Humour in Fielding emanates from different sources and has numerous shades. It arises from ironical situations, the queer behaviour of the people, human oddities, sentimental hypocrisy, vanity, affectation, exaggerated gossips, even from the farcical tragic situations, satirical observations, odd comparisons, funny situations, follies of the people, pedantry, wrong memory, exaggerated facts and such other factors.

There are practical instances which can be put forward in support of the above said factors. The main sources of his humour lie in the vanity, affectation and hypocrisy. The humorous situations are related with the odd individuals. Ironical situation, with all its inevitable humour, arises for example when Miss Bridget thought that her brother was going to present either gown or some ornament for her person, and to her consternation he presented her no one else but the foundling discovered in his bed. There is a far-reaching irony in her giving orders for providing all neces-

saries for the child. It flashes only when we discover the maternal fact of Tom Jones's parentage. Irony travels a long passage of time than humour.

Often there is found a mild stroke of irony in Fielding. For instance it occurs when Allworthy on discovering Tom in his bed summons Mrs. Deborah Wilkins and she out of her strong feminine habit had spent many minutes in adjusting her hair at the looking glass. Fielding has a keen eye even for the trivialities.

The queer behaviour of a person also evokes a sense of humour. For instance the behaviour of Deborah Wilkins while instituting an enquiry about the parentage of Tom, the foundling is enough humorous. Her outrageous sincerity about the affair evokes our sense of humour. The behaviour of Partridge and the behaviour of Adams both set us rolling with laughter.

Then the humour also arises from hypocrisy which can be both sentimental and bare in its blatant form. The instance of the sentimental hypocrisy is that of Mrs. Partridge. "......than the softness of her sex prevailed over the rage, and she presently dissolved in tears, which soon often concluded in a fit."

The instance of the blatant form of hypocrisy is the epitaph put up Bridget at the death of her husband. There is a yawning gap between form and fact. The epitaph is a most severe pointer to the hypocrisy of Allworthy's sister.

Vanity has been very harshly lashed in the character of Squire Western. He is too authoritative and rash, but he lacks in the plain commonsense. His typical remark about Sophia who falls in love with Tom Jones without asking his permission is humorous. It shows the stupidity of a man, or the class to which he belongs.

Even death both farcical and real becomes a subject of laughter. When Captain Blifil dies Bridget goes into tantrums of mourning and puts up the said epitaph. The element of humour is not missing even in the farcical near death of Mr. Allworthy. The element of humour comes floating on the surface on his recovery. The hopes of people for getting

their share are dashed to the ground all at once, and their hypocrisy is revealed so nakedly.

The affectation of learning also becomes a cause of humour. Mr. Partridge's allusions to the classics and classical writers evokes our mirth, and so does that of Adams in *Joseph Andrews*.

The affectation of Thwackum evokes satirical humour in *Tom Jones*. The source of this type of humour is his funny, and cruel, belief of mending a boy through beating, and severe beating too at the same time. His personal foibles are no doubt furnish examples of pure humour, but at the back the anger of Fielding can be traced against such folks who are absurdly cruel with the helpless boys. An instance of his funny cruel belief can be gathered from the following speech: "That he ought to look on his broken limb as a judgment from heaven on his sins. That it would become him to be daily on his knees, pouring forth thanks-givings that he had broken his arm only, and not his neck; which latter," he said, "was very probably reserved for some future occasion". It is a stroke of Fielding's satire directed against those who believe in birch rods in the days of corporal punishment. But on another occasion the sting is found to have been removed: "Thwackum, like King Porus, sullenly submitting to the conqueror."

Another affectation is of the learning of the doctors which makes us laugh. At the death of Captain Blifil the doctors agree without being in a dilemma: "These two doctors, whom, to avoid any malicious applications, we shall distinguish by the names of Dr. Y and Dr. Z, having felt his pulse; to wit, Dr. Y his right arm, and Dr. Z his left; both agreed that he was absolutely dead; but as to the distemper, or cause of his death, they differed; Dr. Y holding that he died of an apoplexy and Dr. Z of an epilepsy." Even the occasion of death is not free from the funny strokes of Fielding's humour.

Such humorous observations of doctors have been repeated in *Tom Jones*. We can refer it to the situation when Tom lies ill and the doctors come to see him. Before that the remark of the landlady is humorous enough who observes

at the all illness of Tom: 'It is an eating fever then,' says the landlady; 'for he hath devoured two swinging buttered toasts this morning for breakfast.' 'Very likely' says the doctors: "I have known people eat in a fever; and it is very easily accounted for; because the acidity occasioned by the febrile matter may stimulate the nerves of the diaphragm, and thereby occasion a craving which will not be easily distinguishable from a natural appetite." After that the doctor's learning is let loose in a funny manner.

Mrs. Honour has been portrayed as a funny woman loving males. "Tom was a handsome young fellow; and for that species of men Mrs. Honour had some regard......She might indeed be called a lover of men, as Socrates was a lover of mankind." The human foibles come within the purview of the novelist and he makes capital out of it. There is often a cool sense of humour in Fielding. For example:

'A very solid objection, in my opinion,' says Sophia. 'I hate him.'

"Will you never learn a proper use of word?" answered the aunt. 'Indeed Child, you should consult Bailey's Dictionary.'

Thus in Fielding we find numerous shades of feeling associated with humour. So far as irony is concerned its best example pertains to the situation where Blifil is taken for Tom Jones and Sophia becomes glad about the match.

3. **Humour about Characters:** Some of the characters in Fielding are very humorous. In *Tom Jones* we find Partridge and Squire Western and some others. In *Joseph Andrews* we have a funny character Parson Adams. These characters both by their speech and action evoke humour in the novel. They are replete with the comic, and have been drawn with the sole purpose of providing humour. But there is a difference in the delineation of such characters. A person like Squire Western has been drawn in the right comic spirit, whereas Parson Adams has been drawn in an exaggerated manner. He even might verge on the burlesque. Their ludicrous approach to life is very humorous.

Mr. Digeon comments on the character of Parson Adams in an eloquent manner: "Although it is without doubt one of the fullest and richest upon which a novelist has ever expended is in no way confused, nothing overlaps ; the figure is admirably wrought." He goes on burgeoning into a 'new life'. His generosity is almost proverbial. He is well versed in the classics, and like a typical philosopher, as it is understood in common parlance, is a forgetful creature who forgets to bring his sermons for which he sets out from his home. He has been endowed with such traits by his creator that he comes to us with all his humorous properties. His absurdities are the real embellishment of his personality. 'It is worthy parson, a good drinker, a great eater and a greater smoker'. He is always 'in the vanguard of these burlesque fights, and beats people with the very hand which blesses them'. In the delineation of his character Fielding has acquitted himself well. Such a character no doubt happens to be interesting, but does not have a psychological depth. Still being of a surface construction, like most of the Dickensian characters, he moves our mirth. We cannot help laughing when he visits Trulliber only to encounter pigs running on him. He 'is a comic hero' full of the milk of human kindness.

Partridge in *Tom Jones* is also a funny character but lags behind Adams in several ways. The accomplishments of Parson Adams are much greater than that of Partridge. He is a scholar, knows Greek and Latin language, knows oriental tongues, besides he knows French, Italian and Spanish. He is a man of good parts, good nature, never any intention to deceive, generous and friendly. He is brave to an excess, and the unfortunate fact is that he is very poor, yet he carries 'a beautiful soul' beneath his 'rags'.

Just as Mr. Tow-house is a henpecked husband and Mrs. Tow-house a shrew, similarly Mr. Partridge is a henpecked husband and his wife is a shrew. We laugh a great deal at their cost. There is also humour in *Joseph Andrews* where Adams instead of paying money offers Sermons to Tow-house. Adams would snap fingers and make two or three rounds. He is thrown into a pond during his medi-

tation and then pulls out his Aeschylus. The horse of Adams borrowed from his clerk had a propensity of kneeling without giving any notice. To make the matter more funny he and his horse pace a distance rolling and afterwards both get up and meet as good friends.

Evidently there is an element of burlesque in the characterisation of Parson Adams which is much different from the spirit of comic professed by Fielding. But he vastly succeeds in creating a droll character.

But the character of Squire Western clings to everyday life, though he has the elements of a typical feudal lord, with all his glaring characteristics. Even his anger does not surprise us. His knave utterances make us highly amused. The fact is he has been drawn with an eye on the humorous possibilities. He is one of the best drawn characters in *Tom Jones*.

4. Comparison of Fielding with Dickens and Jane Austen: The humour of Fielding is broad and farcical, but the humour of Jane Austen is ever so sly. Her sense of mockery is not bold but moderate. Fielding rises much above the gentle mockery. The absurdities of Jane Austen are closer to life. She could not, undoubtedly, draw Adams, because her genius lay in a different sphere. Similarly it would have been impossible for Fielding to draw a character like Mr. Collins. But both of them are pretty humorous in their own right. Though both Adams and Mr. Collins together cannot possibly compare themselves with the rollicking Pickwickians, *Pickwick Papers* being the 'library of humour'. In the comic population Fielding lags behind. Jane Austen keeps her humorous characters like Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet outside the orbit of main action, but in Fielding they participate actively. Parson Adams is the life spirit of *Joseph Andrews*, and Partridge is the Sancho Panza of Tom Jones in the novel. There is more balance in Jane Austen in strong contrast with Fielding or Dickens. Her sense of humour is feminine as it ought to be by virtue of her sex, and the humour of Fielding and Dickens is buoyantly masculine. In them the 'poetry of the ludicrous' is much too loud as compared to Jane Austen. In comic fecundity Dickens is

unsurpassed. "On the other hand Shakespeare has not the same comic fecundity. Dickens is the creator of a whole population of drolls." Both Fielding and Dickens are master of creating comic characters, but the latter does it in the way of a caricature. In an exaggerated manner the characters like Uncle Pumblechook, Joe Gargary, Mrs. Todgers, Mr. Toots; Mrs. Gamp and Mr. Guppy of Dickens rise beyond human possibilities, yet they are not types like that of Ben Johnson. "Dickens's drolls are not funny in the idea but in the actual expression of themselves." (*English Humour* by J. B. Priestley). Peckniff has been called 'hypocrisy with a tuft of hair' by the writer. Dickens is a sentimental drivel whereas Fielding is not. In the former 'tears become maudlin, pathos passes into hiccoughs, and noble indignation snorts off into bombast and rodomon tade.' (*Humour* by Stephen Leacock, p. 102).

The shade of irony in both Fielding and Jane Austen is subtle. In both of them it permeates the comic, as it must according to Saintsbury. In both of them the preachers of morality fall short of the right standard of personality. The ironies of the two are divested of the satirical sting. Both of them are not malevolent though ironical. There is a 'delicate ruthless irony' in Jane Austen, and the irony of Fielding is also not soft either.

5. **Some Elements of Humour in Fielding :** In Fielding 'laughter is a weapon which must be wielded wittingly'. Hypocrisy and affectation have been freely satirized on a healthy comic level. "He infused in it the refreshing and preserving elements of humour." (George Saintsbury). The element of farce has been, in a way, introduced reasonably. 'He also gave the attraction of pure comedy only legitimately salted with farce.' Humour in him is spontaneous and sunny. It springs out of his 'animal spirit'. Walter Raleigh observes in this book *The English Novel*, "In Fielding the stage had found a great humorist and comic wit." There is satire in *Pasquin* (1736) and the *Historical Register* (1737) of political nature, but Fielding is par excellence in his 'light and ridiculous incidents' in his scheme of comic epic poem in prose. But in *Joseph Andrews* : 'there are' comic mis-

adventures, the horse-play and buffetings......the delightful irony that plays like summer lightning round the figure of the absent-minded, foolish, gentle, heroic Parson Adams.' His power of presenting comic incidents and droll characters is superb. According to Cross "he had absorbed the spirit of the great European humorists 'who laughed satire into the world'—Aristophanes, Lucian, Cervantes, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Moliere, Swift and Lesage.' As a satirist he extended satire 'with the direct thrust of an Aristophanes.' Fielding is a humorist of a very high order and he stands elevated because of his compassionate attitude towards the absurd ones and the despicable.

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CHAPTER VIII

FIELDING'S REALISM

The concept of realism is both simple and abstruse. It is both understood and misunderstood by the students of English literature, particularly that of fiction. The term has been defined and explained by different writers much to the chagrin of those who desire to seek a clear and lucid interpretation of it. Before we embark upon the realism of Fielding it would be prudent on our part to have a clear idea about it.

1. What is Realism? : Realism is the fidelity observed in the transcription of life as it is. But the problem arises as how far it can be done. The writers like Percy Lubbock have their own misgivings about it. They hold that the literal transcription of life is well nigh impossible.

A realist is said to be a scientist in fiction which means that he dispassionately and objectively watches and depicts life. There is a tendency among the modern writers to extend realism to ruthless dimensions. For instance there is a novel *Goodbye to Berlin* written by Christopher Isherwood in which he styles himself as a camera "with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking". But this type of realism has got nothing to do with that of Fielding.

Philosophically realism has been construed by Bergson as 'an indivisible flux of consciousness'. This type of concept is least applicable to Fielding, where there is so much of selection. The details in him are meticulous but they do not overwhelm the narrative in a jumbled mass. He knows where to put what.

Alex Comfort calls realism as something more than reportage. Fielding's realism is something more than reportage. In him we find the play of imagination and a vigorous

tendency for selection. An artist is something more than a camera. He enjoys the freedom of exercising his imagination and it in its turn may colour the realistic description with an alloy of romantic fancy.

In Fielding we find what Green chooses to call "the plausible interpretation of life". He has done the work of a bulldozer in lifting up the large chunks of life. The fecundity that he shows in his work is simply marvellous, and it breathes an aroma of recognizable stuff. He seeks to fuse the romantic with the realistic element of life. He differs from the moderns in the sense of refraining himself from the jagged realism. He imposes a pattern upon his work of art, a conscious pattern which makes all the difference between him and the modern writers. He also differs from the naturalists in giving "the fragmentary observations of life". For him realism is not a single but a "multiple thing".

2. Fielding's perception of Reality : "He observes," says Digeon, "the whole of reality." Richardson on the other hand sees only the half of moral reality. But Fielding, being an astute artist, exercises keen faculty of selection. He isolates some expressive traits from the rest and lays emphasis on them. It is a selective realism in which unnecessary and heavy documentation of details is simply eliminated. The stuff of his novels is the stuff of life which can be 'controlled by historical documents'. Sir Walter Scott says about his realism that the persons of the story live in England, travel in England, quarrel and fight in England. "His unlimited penception caught" the soul of a generation. "He could catch the different nuances of life, the shades of the rich and poor in all their diversity." A large variety of English people jostle in *Tom Jones*. He drew abundantly from life, but his realism is of a moderate nature because he excludes 'the cruel truths' so fondly embraced by the modern writers of fiction. But unlike Smollett he is free from 'rancour or hatred'.

While observing the whole of reality he shuts his eyes, says Digeon, to no part of it. "The whole of contemporary England lives in his four novels." In his earlier works Fielding 'shows a picture of merry England which went to

the Beggar's Opera and rolled with laughter at its thieves'. His faculty of giving details is simply astonishing. There is "the frank gaiety of his realism" which "gives it its peculiar quality". He is the master of the "knowledge of human heart". His wide experience has been very beautifully observed by Leslie Stephen in his book *Hours in a Library* wherein he discusses Fielding's novels. He says about him in the following words "It is the knowledge of Ulysses who has known "Cities of men", and manners, climates, councils, governments." His observation has been called 'masculine' by virtue of his virile perception of a broader view of life.

3. **His Psychological Realism :** Digeon considers the incidents in Fielding philosophical at the back. He perceives in him the psychological realism which is something more penetrating than what we find in the material detail. This psychological realism is a shattering force which while laughing takes up a cudgel against the conventional morality, and the pity is that they are exposed in the light of the common place truths of our daily existence. Fielding has the knack of probing deep into the facts of life, and in this effort he is not baulked by any fromidable moral dogma. How does it matter if "the prudish Pamela may be an artful minx, the virtuous Blifil a rogue ; and the Squire a moralist and a hypocrite."

His psychological realism treats the motives and intentions with a peculiar depth and interprets human behaviour in that light. The deeds may appear wrong, but the intention right as in the case of Tom Jones with regard to Black George for whom he tells a lie. In Dickens there is an alloy of idealism whereas in Fielding's psychological realism there is nothing of this kind. He is a realist with the temper of a psychologist who is objective and dispassionate like a scientist. Intention is the very expression of soul, and it is encountered in Fielding. At the back of the comedy lies his tendency for psychological realism.

4. **The Scope of his Realism :** Fielding's realism is extensive and broad. He 'expresses it in passionate dialogues, rough words, simple and familiar gestures'. There is reason

for his being a broad realist. He is a man of objective approach. Richardson lacks this quality and what hampers the scope of his realism is his subjective quality. An objective artist gets scope for a free play of imagination and the scope of displaying his genius, whereas the subjective artist loses ground unless he chooses to depict the multi-coloured psyche, and Richardson was handicapped on that score though he probed meticulously into inner life.

The vast panorama of life is the repository of the material found in the contemporary England. It is because of this that he comes to achieve truth in the realm of his novels. The tendency to caricature is due to the influence of his sojourn in Holland 'the cradle of his art'. It was only at the end of his life that he came into contact with the lower reaches of humanity. The atmosphere painted by him breathes the atmosphere of real life, it is because of his close observation of people and places. "His knowledge," says Leslie Stephen in *Hours in a Library*, "is drawn from observation rather than intuitive sympathy."

His scope is something beyond the narrow regionalism attempted by other novelists. He widens the scope of writing, and in this respect he stands vastly different from the writers who took some imaginary places for their locale. "His imaginatioin : is tenanted by virtuous parsons and model persons instead of Arcadian Shepherds or Knight errant and fair ladies." "His comedies," says Wilbur L. Cross in his book *The Development of the English N vel*, "are evidence that he had observed life closely in Somersetshire and more specially in the town, in the region of the Haymarket and Covent Garden." *Tom Jones* in his opinion stands for the fulness of Fielding's art and manhood. Into it Fielding compressed his richest observations on life and his ripest thought ; and expended in its composition—'some thousands of hours'. A critic pays a high tribute to his work of art by observing : "As a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth ; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare, though without any of the genius and poetical qualities of his mind." Right from the aristocracy down to the "howling pits' Fielding described life as it was.

But it is noteworthy that he did not try funny antics like some cheap writers to achieve verisimilitude. "All devices to account for his subject-matter, such as bundles of letters fragmentary or rat-eaten manuscripts, found by chance, or given to the writer in keeping, are brushed aside as cheap and silly." On the other hand, he "throws off the mask of anonymity, steps out boldly, and asks us to accept his omniscience and omnipresence."

5. Quality of his Realism: Realism was already in existence, says Cazamian, Defoe had given it a very definite expression. It embodied both the middle class spirit and the classical mind. It was tempered with a strong social bias. It is wrong to think that realism in fiction emerged as a reaction to sentimentalism, it existed there in spite of the strong Puritanism, rather it reacted against such a force in an effort to liberate humanity from its 'narrow and morbid' clutches. The realism of Fielding sought to readjust the position of sentiment in a proper key. It also prompted the 'taste for the concrete' of the people.

He does not omit sex from life, he describes it with a gusto, but respects the social decency. It must also find place in his realistic writings because he sought to present a 'complete picture of human life' through a 'multitude of characters'. According to Walter Bagehot, Cross observes, his novels belong to a class called 'ubiquitous'.

6. Affinity of Characters with Life: His characters are different from the writers of his time. They have a strong affinity with life, and in others they are remote from it. "Fielding's characters are nearer to life than those in the fiction before him." The others cared to make them 'types' and Fielding sought to make them 'individuals'. The English dramatists had given 'such playcards' as Vainlove, Fondlewife, Maskwell, Lady Touchwood, Lord Foppington, Ned Softly, Will Honeycomb. Fielding created beings out of flesh and blood from different strata of life. He spotlighted them showing their foibles. In this sense 'Fielding's wide and careful observation of real life was his great corrective. Yet some of the characters in Fielding are closer to drama than to the novel, the characters like Lady Booby or

Mrs. Slipslop. 'Amelia' Fielding's last novel, says Cross, was a movement towards the specific in art, and consequently towards realism.

7. His Social Realism: The realism of Fielding has a 'documentary value'. The life of the then England exists in his novels. "Town manners, the pleasures and amusements of the capital, country society organised round the squire, and where the vicar occupies for a time, a singularly less dignified place ; stage coaches, inns, and the incidents of the road, the underworld of vice and crime have here left traces sufficiently accurate in themselves to be of use to the historian. As a magistrate, Fielding knows well the conflicts of the penal code and the instincts ; he recounts them with the exactitude of a well-informed witness, and the zeal of a reformer."

He holds a mirror to the social temper of the time. We do not find only the concrete images of material life in his novels, but the odd position of the legal abstractions harassing the age. "His calm, objective work is at times animated by a humane ardour." Gibbon was moved to comment on *Tom Jones* "......that exquisite picture of human manners." Fielding has depicted the sordid, the brutal and the ugliest reality existing in society alongside with the magnanimous impulses. The type of the world that he gives has a "great panorama of the eighteenth century world, its roads and inn parlours and masquerades and country houses and shabby town lodgings, and the company of Tom and his pretty Sophia and Partridge and pert Mrs. Honour and roaring Squire Western and all the ostlers and landlords and bullies and wenches." J. B. Priestley seems to warn us that this 'coarse and hearty realism' must not blind us to the 'solid weight of intellect' in Fielding.

8. The Concept of Realism Supported by his own Beliefs: The concept of Fielding's realism has been supported by his own beliefs. In Book I Chapter I of *Tom Jones* he declares that "the provision, then which we have here made is no other than Human Nature". One who seeks to bank on human nature shall, evidently, eschew the imaginary material. He must be a man of concrete perception, and it

certainly plays a vigorous role in his novel. But there is a selective tendency along with it. He would not like to gulp like a greedy glutton everything that appears on the table. "Many exquisite viands might be rejected by the epicure," says he. "In reality, true nature is as difficult to be met with in authors as the Bayonne ham, or Bologna sausage, is to be found in the shops." Since he created a new province of writing he was quite aware of the difficulties besetting his path. The problem is about the 'true nature' which was so rarely encountered in the contemporary writings. He is the sort of writer who would not mince matters, the simple and straight manner is best for him. "In like manner, we shall represent human nature at first to the keen appetite of our reader in that more plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country and shall hereafter hash and ragoo it with all the French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford." The 'first course' served by him achieves a peculiar verisimilitude, and the first course is the realistic exposition of the novel.

He does not see eye to eye with those who gave 'an apology for a life, as is more in fashion', as he sought to give the large chunks of life, though originally conceived as a human life in the form of history. The concept of 'history' brings in a new force of human realism in the writings of Fielding.

In his *Book IV Chapter I* of *Tom Jones* he writes: "As truth distinguishes our writings from those idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains." The tradition of idle romances is flung aside and a new province of writing comes into being in which men of flesh and blood play their role. The social background is of the existing society. It strikes a peculiar note, the ship is in the offing for a haven of realism.

His very conception of hero and heroine undergoes a change. The hero has a dubious birth, of his being an illegitimately begotten child. The concept of the hero shakes the very foundation of smug morality. The result was that a battle royal ensues between the critics and him. He has

condemned them in strong invectives. But he 'opens a new vein of knowledge' which may probably have a large share in constituting in us the idea of all beauty, as well as natural or artificial. Fielding has a more astute sense of art than the contemporaries, he even improves upon the concept of reality as understood by Aristotle who said "that the theatrical stage is nothing more than a representation," or as Aristotle calls it "an imitation of what really exists." Fielding changes the position by saying in his *Book VII Chapter I :* "But, in reality, we are not so fond of paying compliments to these people, whom we use as children frequently do the instruments of their amusement ; and have much more pleasure in hissing and buffeting them, than admiring their excellence." He probes into the inner reality judging actions not by their deeds but by their intentions as in the case of Black George. For him "life most exactly resembles the stage, since it is often the same person who represents the villain and the hero ; and he who engages your admiration today will probably attract your contempt tomorrow." His judgment is more real as he says "a single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage." The realism involving human nature is accurate and Fielding is the pioneer of the forces which lifted mask off the face of reality.

Fielding's concept of realism does not admit of 'elves and other such mummery', his subject therefore is 'Man'. He has nothing to do with 'those surprising imaginations'. In his *Book VIII Chapter I* he makes his ideas clear about it. He supports, further, his cause of realism by writing in the same chapter in the following manner "Nor is possibility alone sufficient to justify us, we must keep likewise within the rules of probability." Even the action "In the last place ......should be such as may not only be within the compass of human agency, and which human agents may probably be supposed to do." The views of Fielding on realism are varied and many. He bursts on the stage of the English novel writing with that robust sense of reality, both inner and outer. As a theorist he is a staunch realist.

9. **Conclusion:** The very perception of Fielding's reality

is comprehensive. The selective realism of which he is a master lays emphasis on certain strong traits and makes capital out of it. Unlike Richardson he sees the whole of reality. He stands as a realist even in the sphere of morality the formidable platitudes flung in the faces of the gullible folks of the time. He changed, thus, the very map of English morality. Further, in him we find the record of facts which can be controlled easily by 'historical documents'. The facts employed in his writings are the repository of social realities of his time. He paints atmosphere with the brush of a realist.

His sense of realism does not remain confined to the outer reality and concrete images, it probes deeper into the inner nuances of life. He perfects the psychological realism introduced by Richardson, and the efforts in this connection do not baulk at the moral or immoral facts of life incorporated in his writings. He is not an idealist like Richardson. As a realist Fielding is an objective artist, and the knowledge that he draws, says Leslie Stephen, is from observation rather than intuitive sympathy. But the knowledge which he commands is multidimensional and extremely varied. But as a realist he eliminates the "cruel truths" of life. He does not drag his realism to ruthless dimensions. Sex does exist in his novels as a part of life, but it is not revealing what we find in D. H. Lawrence. It has no shocking nudity either. As a realist Fielding introduces the disreputable characters, the tendency we encounter in W. S. Maugham who like him is compassionate towards the despicable ones. The real despicable characters in Fielding are those who are given to act verbatim on the scriptures without observing them in deeds and intentions. The social panorama is striking in Fielding which gives us a concrete realistic touch. The 'masculine' realism of Fielding teems with vigour and such strikes a new note. Thus it is no exaggeration to say "as a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth ; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare."

CHAPTER IX

ART OF HENRY FIELDING

1. General Comments: The emergence of a new genre of art in the Eighteenth Century, which influenced the later generation of novelists, owes its existence to Henry Fielding. The conception of his art is firmly based on the theories which caused the new orientations in the realm of fiction of the time. Out of the rich ore of his experience is moulded the fine shining metal which dazzled the century, though made even the discerning critics croak against him. The greatness of Fielding as an artist rests upon several factors. As a student of human psychology he is superb. Eschewing the epistolary method of writing he embarked upon the omniscient method which broadened his scope of writing. Further, his knowledge of drama contributed to a great extent in imposing a dramatic pattern on the novels. His art, though depending upon low life, has a classical bias. The comic hilarity relieves the sober tone of the novels. There is an astonishing diversity which simply baffles us. It has within its gamut both reason and sentiments. As an artist he enjoys a perfect freedom. W. S. Maugham, also, says that freedom is enjoyed only by the criminals and the artists. Further, he could succeed in imposing 'his law' upon the new genre of writing. As a theorist Fielding is unique. Saintsbury says about him that 'almost every kind of novel exists potentially in his four'.

The art of Fielding is not a confused mass but shows a fine sense of selection. There is 'a personal synthesis of different elements'. He is a master of comprehensive reality, whereas Richardson sees only half of the moral reality. He has a keen eye over every nook and corner of human life and social conditions.

As an artist he is not essentially a moralist. His writings are not didactic, because that would have been a

slur on art, yet he is not blind to the moral values. In every great artist it must remain concealed, it is concealed in his writings. The morality in him oozes in right form, but not the conventional morality, the type of morality which tends to improve the human conduct. He becomes a force as an artist so much so that he influences the great novelists like Dickens and Thackeray in later years.

2. The New Genre : Though Defoe before him had opened a realistic vista of art, yet it was Fielding who widened it by achieving a kind of verisimilitude which was unknown in the century. The scope of Richardson was narrow, though he could bring in a psychological insight into the characters. But then he could not get himself rid of the hot house atmosphere. His *Pamela* has been condemned as a 'salacious' tale. The new avenues of art were broadened by Fielding by embracing a much wider gamut of life Church says in his *Growth of the English Novel* : "He is the first writer to focus the novel in such a way that it brought the whole world as we see it within the scope of this now rapidly maturing literary form." The point whether Fielding is the father of the English Novel or not is highly debatable, but Baker quells the moot point by saying that Fielding has a better claim for it than Richardson. Being an artist of 'great imagination and of great critical power' he enjoys an indisputable superiority over Richardson.

3. Fielding as a student of Human Psychology : "He observes and judges life of his own and that of others. He scans it very penetratingly and with great mastery, and reproduces it with admirable and pathetic lucidity." He is a master of psychological realism 'which laughs to see fine theories shattered by the bulgar truth of daily life.' He ushers in a new tendency, though not altogether new, of looking into inner traits of a character. To analyse the motives and intentions certainly raises him higher than others as an artist. There is a truth finding urge in him. He is not content with the surface life, he wants to probe deeper into facts, and it gives him a superior status. And that is one reason that he is not daunted even by the so-called immoral acts which he incorporates freely into his writings.

4. As a writer of Comic Epic in Prose : Digeon says about him that 'properly speaking, the novel of Fielding is a comic epic poem in prose.' It is a new venture as an artist. *Tom Jones* written in an epic style has a classical dignity. But the novel cannot be called entirely an epic because there is a critic who observes that 'epic has no secret' whereas the novel has, the secret about the Tom's parentage. It is more of a dramatic style than that of epic. But in width and scope *Tom Jones* is an epic. "Fielding invented it quite consciously using his dramatic experience and classic education, and the rules of epic as interpreted by critics, especially French (Le Bossu)" According to Digeon Fielding observes "the 'law' of the epic with increasing fidelity". As a writer of an epic Fielding fuses the new tendencies with the old ones. The canvas of the novel *Tom Jones* is as large as life itself, and the tale rambles down to the last page with the freedom of an epic.

As a writer of comic epic poem in prose Fielding creates a new 'province of writing' which is unprecedented in the sphere of the novel. This art form is entirely new which revolutionises the conception of the novel. It is an antithesis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* carved on a two inches bit of ivory.

5. Fielding as a Dramatic Genius : Though Fielding switched over from play writing to that of novel, yet he could not relinquish the dramatic influence which persists in his prose fiction. His play *Love in Several Masques* was produced in 1728. Then he wrote *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* which was produced in 1731. But in 1735 he grew weary of play writing and later on took to the writing of a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. In 1742 he brought out *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. Afterwards he wrote *Tom Jones*. The influence of drama persists in his novels. He imitates Cervantes for his art.

Fielding himself plays the role of a chorus in the novels, according to a critic. It has taken to be a kind of flaw by another critic who says "There is in Fielding one impertinent essayist, who reappears on the slightest pretext, and develops

moral commonplaces with the occasional wearisome complacency of a Jonson or a Goldsmith." There is a vein of anxiety in him to explain to the audience about the newness of art and his basic conceptions about it.

His dramatic genius, probably, leads him to eschew the epistolary method which would not allow him a free movement The force of dramatic influence is found in his dialogues and in the arrangement of the incidents. This dramatic tendency is something new in the sphere of Eighteenth Century novels which had got riddled with the letters. It elevates, obviously, the new genre of art. It is because of his dramatic genius that he comes to be compared with the master of English drama. "In many respects he stands nearest to Shakespeare among English authors......in his breadth of view, in his kindly tolerance and in his unfailing sympathy for human frailty he is Shakespearean". As an artist Fielding is essentially dramatic.

6. The Comic Spirit : Fielding ushers in a new spirit of comic in his prose fiction. Before him the poetry of Chaucer had seen humour 'of the purest and sunniest kind'. The novelist brings i.e., new comic elements rare in the century. He 'distinguishes his own laugher from the burlesque or caricature.' He enjoys a hilarious joke, unlike Jane Austen. In this sense his comedy gains a quality which appeals to the readers. The ridiculous in life moves his mirth. "His laughter upsets conventions or does not even notice them." His caricature wherever it occurs is not of the order of Dickens who gets a little scarred by his tall exaggeration. Digeon observes about his exaggeration in his book : "......his occasional appearance of exaggeration ; one thinks he is forcing a note, when he is really isolating it, or setting it against a contrast. This is due to the influence of contemporary caricature, and trace of his sojourn in Holland, the cradle of his art."

In Chaucer humour 'is an affair mostly of the brain, and if it touches the heart at all, it is to prick a victim at a tender spot' and in Fielding it is to bring out the incongruity between appearance and reality. He has an enormous wit about him. Even the horseplay is not missing in him. He

could not shake off the influence of the century, the mode of the p.caresque in the novel though he himself extracted from it to a certain extent. This 'virile gaiety now passes into the English novel through the medium of dramatist expelled from the stage.' The laughter of Fielding was found to be infections which infected a man like Dickens in the 19th Century.

His efforts to parody Richardson's 'Pamela' evokes the comic spirit, but it has a serious purpose beneath it. He wanted to establish new canons of morality far from the established Christian dogmas. The artist, in him in this sense, sought something beyond humour. He is an artist of serious purposes, and what is humour if it is not 'thinking in fun and feeling in earnest', as defined by J. B. Priestley. Though in the later years of his life Fielding lost the early spring yet did not lose much of it. Richardson, on the other hand, had written in a serious vein. His humour does not condemn the despicable characters for all their foibles, but rather pities them. The hot house atmosphere of the novel created by his contemporary is relieved of its gloom by the flapping lungs of the humorous writer like Fielding. 'Light and ridiculous' permeates the very fabric of his novels.

The Story Element : The story element in Fielding is the work of a great *recontour*, the teller of a tale He does not let any didactic purpose mar the tone of his narration. The beginning of *Tom Jones* is, certainly, most uncoventional and most shocking, yet most interesting. As a teller of tales he is conscious of the beginning, the middle and an end. The life that he deals in is so noisy and boisterous. The social elements come to merge in the interesting story narrated by him, but they remain in background. The characters bounce into view one after another giving an evidence of his fecundity as an artist. They stand highly individualised from one another, and that aids another feather to the cap of the glory of the artist.

In characterisation Fielding maintains a peculiar artistic balance. He is conscious of the dual aspects of an individual whom he wants to paint. There is no unmitigated villain in the writings of Fielding. They get benefit of his

generosity and magnanimity. He stands 'for the natural goodness of the heart'. His conception of the history of a character introduces a new element, which is something more than a history or even a biography. His conception of history embraces both the personality of the hero and the social climate in which he lives. He does not fear in drawing from the low life, but he must not be condemned for it. William Whitehead observes beautifully about it when he says "peculiar art of writing upon low subjects without writing in a low manner." Here Dr. Johnson mistook him for crying down his *Tom Jones* as a 'vicious' book. He simply differs from the serious writers in his 'fable and action'.

8. Evaluation of Fielding as an Artist : Unlike his contemporaries Fielding holds an important place in the realm of English fiction. He is the first theorist to lay down laws of fiction. He is the creator of a new *genre* of art which opens new vistas, nay the highways of the English novel which easily cross through the century and advance to the further territories of fiction in future. He is 'the first to display the qualities of the perfect novelist as distinguished from the romancer'. He is a realist par excellence, and in this sense surpasses his contemporary Defoe who ushers in this note. Fielding as an artist comes to achieve a peculiar verisimilitude.

No one before him had given such a wide kaleidoscopic view of life. He is a writer of broad and fast moving panorama of life. He has an astonishing capacity to probe into the depth of a character, nay in sifting the motives and intentions. Then there is that peculiar sense of selection which imbues his writings. The range of his writing widens and gains in depth so much so that even a fastidious critic like Saintsbury is moved to recognise his genius. He says about him : "He gave it altogether a larger, wider, higher, deeper range. He infused in it the refreshing and preserving element of humour." According to Cross his *Tom Jones* "stands for the fulness of Fielding's art and manhood."

The introductory chapters of his histories of fictitious characters give us new notions of his great art, the "high

notions of the dignity of art which he may be considered as having founded." The critics have recognised 'the great artistic worth' of his writings which have been largely based upon his theories.

As a novelist he writes in a vein of abundant humour. He is not glum and serious like Richardson. His pen, however, has not been dipped in acid. The artist has a peculiar tolerance about him. He is not verbose like Richardson, he commands a control over his art. Like him he does not imitate Marivaux, he founds his novel method depending upon his plethora of experience.

His artistic genius is reflected in his conception of novel. It is not for nothing that Byron who once denounced the character of Tom Jones as a 'blackguard' showers encomium upon him by styling him as 'the prose Homer of human nature'. Fielding himself says about it in his *Book I Chapter I* of *Tom Jones* in the following words : "The provision, then, which we here made is no other than Human Nature." "......that in human nature, though here collected under one general name, is such a prodigious variety." "......true nature is as difficult to be met with in authors, as the Bayonne ham." As an artist he knows how to 'dress up' his subject with the prodigious variety of human nature at its back.

Fielding eschews sublimity in favour of the 'ludicrous' and interprets human nature and destiny in that light. The creative fecundity of the artist helps him abundantly to flower and blossom in such a manner as to influence the progeny of coming writers.

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CHAPTER X

PLOT CONSTRUCTION

As a conscious artist Fielding lays down several 'keels' in succession and then binds them together to achieve the unity of design. Unlike Jane Austen who writing later covers a limited range, Fielding knows no limit. His prodigious fecundity and gift of invention spurs him on to the ever-increasing frontiers wherein bustle different shades of character. His plot however is not close knit as he chooses to allow more space in between the settings, but the spaces so strewn are joined by an adroitly woven thread of the story. It does not mean that his plot is loose like some of the novels written in a picaresque vein. In spite of several fillings the plot maintains a high unity, and achieves compactness. The panorama of life both in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* goes on rambling to any distance. It is perfectly relevant to his scheme of writing the comic epics in prose. It would have been absurd for him to work, with this idea in view, to work on a two inch bit of ivory as done by Jane Austen at a later stage. The necessity of the width of the plot differs in the individual cases, and both of them are right in their own scheme of work.

Fielding shows an astute sense of craftsmanship in welding events in the plot. But we have not to judge him in the light of the developed technique of today. We shall allow him concession in this respect in the sense that he for the first time following an ambitious scheme of writing attempted such a huge hulk of plot. But the founder of a 'new province of writing' could not help making it improbable on certain spots. In dimension the plots are widely sizable. There are traces of his conscious skill in taking up different threads scattered over the narrative and twist them in a logical order. By the time we reach *denouement* all the diffi-

culties are mostly resolved and we are propelled towards the predetermined end. He scarcely shows any ingenuity in the manipulation of the incidents. "The basis of these incidents is borrowed from the common stock of picaresque novelists or from contemporary life," says Digeon. But he rocognises his strength in the synthetic skill of the same and he observes: "But it is in the regrouping of these elements that Fielding's mastery is so brilliantly manifest." Even Richardson gave vent to his ire over the quality of the incidents. "The fellow has no invention" was his typical remark. Even in *Jonathan Wild* he did not veer from 'the usual biographies', but according to Digeon Fielding decided to construct *Joseph Andrews* on the principles of dramatic action. "The plot of *Tom Jones* is directed on these principles with a perfection which is almost too severe."

In the plot construction Fielding's dramatic experience and classic education helped him a great deal, and also the rules of epic according to a critic called Le Bossu. According to Digeon Fielding gave to the novel its 'classical letters patent'. He came to observe "the 'law' of the epic with increasing fidelity". In him we find the fusion of the conservative technique and the novel method of Fielding. "He gave the example, the formula of a more exacting method of building up the plot which never quite disappeared after him." In 1749, quotes Digeon, a critic in the London Magazine defining as a classic type Fielding's conception of the novel, describes it as "a noveler prose epic composition" which "like such all good compositions, consists of a principle history, and a great many episodes or incidents; all of which arise naturally from the subject and contribute towards carrying on the chief plot or design." It is a high tribute paid to his skill as a constructor of plot. Sir Walter Scott was amazed at the plot construction of *Tom Jones* and of *Amelia*. Coleridge too considered it one of the three best plots, the other two being *Oedipus Tyrrannus* and *Alchemist*. "What a master of composition Fielding was!" cried the poet, who declared that *Tom Jones* was one of the three most perfect plots ever planned." (*The English Novel* by J. B. Priestley).

Walter Allen in his book *The English Novel* (p. 54) has observed 'architectonic quality' in *Tom Jones*. "No plot has ever been carried through with more consummate skill, and the skill can be truly appreciated only after the book has been closed. In reading one is delighted with the swiftness of the narration, the economy, the nimble and inexhaustible invention." The critic attributes this skill of plot construction to his experience of theatre. In breaking the narrative, setting his scene in swift passages of dialogue he shows the dramatic skill. The beauty of the plot construction is not revealed properly till we reach the end of the novel. What previously appears to be merely 'a happy stroke of invention' proves to be the component of the 'essential structure of the book' and without which the whole could not exist. From Walter Allen's point of view Fielding is as superb a craftsman as Henry James. It is generally thought that Man of the Hill is a extraneous appendage to the novel, but it has been partly, though not explicitly, explained by Walter Allen. He observes: "There is only plot on the novel judged as a formal whole, the introduction of the extraneous story of the Man of the Hill, and even that can plausibly, if not convincingly, be justified. But we remain in dark about this moot point. The Man of the Hill, evidently, stands out side the main rims of the plot of *Tom Jones*."

The plot of *Joseph Andrews*, however, is not as compact as the plot of *Tom Jones*. The reason for it is not far to seek. The book begins with the parody of Richardson's *Pamela* and after ten chapters the whole thing comes to a half because Fielding veers to greater objects. It causes a split in the structure, but it however tends to make the matter stronger than the parody conceived at the beginning. Digeon observes about it in the following words: "After indicating it so firmly in the beginning, the author does not adhere to it closely just as a ship continues to move after the engines have stopped, so is the novel moves forward by the impulse of its first chapters and at the end, Fielding artfully gathers together all the loose threads of the plot." In this respect the preconceived plot of *Tom Jones* becomes richer in design and well knit. In a work like *Joseph Andrews* 'the ending is necessarily the weak point.' The plot is dragged

forward by Joseph Andrews and Lady Booby. "People...... who thus from the centre of the action are not always the centre of interest." The organic development shown in *Tom Jones* is much superior to that of *Joseph Andrews*. Smollett lacks the technical skill in the construction of plots. "Smollett professed to imitate *Gilblas* as Fielding professed to imitate Cervantes. Smollett's story inherits from its ancestory a reckless looseness of construction. It is a series of anecdotes strung together by the accident that they all happen to the same person." In a pure picaresque it is a fault, so many things cannot happen to one person alone. Fielding's main strength lies in his prudent devition from picaresque in many ways."

The broad scheme of the plot of Fielding depends upon his relinquishing the epistolary method. It gave him not only strength of design, but strength of dimension also. George Saintsbury in his book *The English Novel* (Chapter *The Four Wheels* p. 99) observes about it in the following words : "Fielding relieved the novel of the tyranny and constraint of the Letter; he took it out of the rut of confinement. He gave it altogether a larger, deeper range." Thus the comic epic in prose comes to command a broader area of movement. A critic, however, has his own objection to the nomenclature of 'comic epic.' He considers *Tom Jones* nearer to the drama than to epic for in his opinoin the epic has no secret, though he praises the novel for its 'large and firm design'. Fielding curiously has given a form to the novel which the subsequent writers have not lost sight of. Though of late, an ultra modern tendency, has set it and the effects are achieved even without the agency of a plot. The plot decadence is not less amazing.

The episodes form the main threads and there is a rich variety of them grafted on the plot of the novel. *Joseph Andrews*, says Cross in his book *Development of the English Novel* (The Eighteenth Century Realists) is a series of adventures in high and low life, divided into books having mock-heroic introductions, and diversified by episodes. According to him, further it has its prototype in the burlesque adventures by Cervantes and Scarron and in the picaresque novel

as refined by Lesage in *Gilblas* . In *Tom Jones* the episodes are the different pegs to which the story has been nailed at different spots. These episodes shape the contours of the plot and also propel it onward. Luckily the episodes save us from the monotony which might have bored one while reading such a large epic. And these episodes have been diffused over the canvas of the novel which is certainly very large. "Actually it is so stirring with life that many readers do not notice how closely knit and logical its action is and probably do not care, being content to lean back and enjoy this great panorama of the eighteenth—century world......

Fielding gave "the Novel the bustle of life itself, and yet also giving it shapeliness and balance and a massive solidity." His scheme of the plot is, really, very ambitious, and so is the number of characters moving there in. The dynamic quality lends the speedy sketching to the plot, yet it is amazing that Fielding achieves the symmetry in the big novel of the length breadth of *Tom Jones*. Before the plot starts taking shape much of the life is found to have swept, yet the suggestions thrown at the start have not been wasted. They catch up with the coming events. The central force of the plot, gains its strength from the suspense of the secret of the parentage of the hero. But the exposition stands well ignited and things move on though in a leisurely manner, but to a surer and more logical end. The plot proves to be highly organic because the incidents are moored to the plan of the story. The diverse threads are not allowed to remain scattered for long, they are knotted up as a part of the design of the story. Thus the plot does not look barren, but achieves a certain pattern in which different elements come to play a definite role. The structural purpose is not lost sight of. A less skilled artist would have given more weight to the centralised hero rather than to the helping factors. Fielding cares for the whole and for that he takes good care of the attending factors, and that is one reason, because of this technique of construction, that a certain atmosphere is found enveloping the entire plot. "The integral components of a definite plot pattern" serve to make it a composite whole. It is only applicable to *Tom Jones* and not *Joseph Andrews*.

The element of improbability and the various machinations in the composition of the plot structure are no doubt a kind of stigma on the technique, but at the same time we must not dilate upon it. He is the first writer who, breaks the ground of fiction showing path to the coming ones. Fielding is not a novelist of his contury, he is a force breaking through his age to penetrate the future generations. He is definitely superior to those sticking to the rambling picaresque. He builds up the plot directing it towards the catastrophe and ultimately to a logical end which must not leave any doubt lingering about it.

In order to save the narrative from the tedium of moral prosing and theorising he provides the prefatory chapter in each book. But it does not hamper the plot in any way. The story right from its exposition to the end goes on unhindered. Had he inserted his theories, the laws laid down by the art legislator, in between haphazardly he would have impeded the flow of the narrative. He lets the plot etch itself vividly without any such interruption.

His plots are much superior, as they held, in the novels than in the plays. Before him the plots were nothing short of thin bare lines without any complications. His is a complex method as compared to Defoe who gave a single thread of the story. The incidents and the events that occur in the course of the narrative do not hang loosely about. Fielding is a consummate artist who knows his business best and takes us where he wants us to take. The plots of his contemporaries are ever so thin, whereas his plots have both stamina and bulk. At the end of the novel it gains from the intrigue in which the hero finds himself hedged in. It is another blow to the plausibility of the action, yet it has something extraordinarily theatrical about it, In creating conflicts he shows his inventive genius, but in settling them, one may say, he adopts the commonplace devices. He has salted the narrative with melodramatic machinery for preserving the pleasing armona of interest. Who would have thought of reading a long epic without that bite in it.

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CHAPTER XI

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization in Fielding is a part of his psychological realism. He gets into the 'skin' of his characters, yet they are not their dimensional. Jane Austen in the characterization of Mr. Darcy shows a greater skill in the sense that he has been painted from different angles. It is perfectly a round character. The characters of Fielding are also round, but in adifferent sense. They are dynamic but they do not change colours. They are round in the sense that they show several facets of their personality. Their inner self is easily manifested by their 'speech and action'. According to Digeon they have been seen and painted from within. All their intentions and motives are revealed in action. They are not what they profess but they are what they do. It is their conduct in life which matters and determines the tone of their personality.

Fielding's portrait-gallery consists of life-like characters full-blooded and vital. "While Richardson consciously constructs his puppets out of the frigid abstraction ......Fielding paints flesh and blood." They are not types but individuals, and they carry about them the tendencies of the time, though, the fact of their being universal cannot be denied.

1. Types and Individuals : The characters of Fielding stand highly individualised from one another. There is hardly any 'overlapping' anywhere. Different shades of people jostle in his pages. His 'crowed canvas' presents a large variety of them, and they do not cease appearing one after another as the story proceeds on.

One is likely to be mistaken by the comment of Digeon on the characters of Fielding. According to him he 'paints

the types of his time'. It does not mean that the characters of Fielding are types, they are individuals. The remark only shows a close reference to the mode of behaviour of the century, and not the aspirations of an individual. The characters of fielding are nothing if they are not individuals. The types are characterized by their single pattern of idiosyncracy and not the blend of mixed traits. Mixed characteristics are seen in Fielding's characters. Altruism resides in *Tom Jones* adjacent to the sexual passion, the blatant display of it shocks us : "What an alloy of generosity is to be found even amidst base motives." Even his villains "with a significant exception are never monsters. They have some touch of human emotion." The mixed traits tend to point out their high individuality and save Fielding from the charge of creating types.

2. The Technique of Characterization : Fielding's technique of characterization depends upon his objective approach, the comprehension of the inner psychology, the understanding of the distinction between action and motive and the grouping and regrouping of characters. Further, the perspective of the novelist is always quickened, except in cases of rank villainy like that of Blifil in 'Tom Jones,' by a strong sense of comic.

The objective artist must naturally be impartial, and Fielding, obviously, is very impartial. The absence of ideals help him in looking at a person dispassionately.

Further, his faculty of probing deep into the innerself of a character gives him advantage over the characterization of his contemporaries who only depicted the surface life. Richardson, of course, is one who comprehended the feminine psychology so well, but then his scope of study is very limited. Digeon observes about his psychological approach in the following words : "The essential thing about Fielding is his effort to plumb deep and reach the truth. Try to see into yourself, do not stop at the moral or immoral appearance of an action ; the prudish Pamela may be an artful minx, the virtuous Blifil a rogue, and the Squire a moralist and a hypocrite. Go deeper than words and judge deeds, go deeper than deeds and judge intentions

which are the immediate expression of the soul, go deeper even than conscious intentions." It is a very significant comment on his psychological technique of characterization.

The human conduct does not always reflect motive. Tom Jones may tell a lie, but he may do so for an altruistic motive. The action has got the right to be judged in the light of the intention. This distinction between action and motive has been perfectly understood by the novelist at the time of characterization.

Another aspect of his technique is the grouping and regrouping of characters. In the beginning one is likely to think that the characters strewn over the canvas of the novel may move independently. But it is not so. The artist catches up the threads which he has thrown at the early stage. Partridge, the school teacher meets Tom Jones again as a barber. It is only applicable to the important characters and not the insignificant ones like the inn-keepers and the stray maids. He groups and regroups them with a preconceived plan. "Characters set off one another, and are grouped" abserves a critic.

The element of comic plays an important role in the characterization of Fielding. He has a keen eye for the human foibles, but he does not condemn them. He accepts them as human realities He paints them with perfect fidelity to truth. The ludicrous in Fielding emanates from the human incongruities, the distinction between the expression of beliefs and the absurdity of the action. He distinguishes his own laughter from the burlesque or caricature, says Digeon, which he leaves to the picaresque school. "His laughter upsets conventions or does not even notice them." The comic conception of the hero dismantles the social barriers and status. He cares little whether hero be aristocratic or 'low' the essential thing is that he should be comic." The 'severe comedy' is seasoned with a 'gentle mockery'. "This virile gaiety now passes into the English novel through the medium of a dramatist expelled from the stage."

Trying to find out the technique of characterization might be termed as something absurd, because the spontaneity

and ease which mark his characters baffle us. Unconsciously he does a great deal which has been categorised later. The prodigious diversity of souls found in Fielding does not appear to have been planned. They have come into being in such a bumper growth as the flowers do in a spring, and so wonderfully differ enuntiated at the same time. They are the rich products of his wide experience.

3. The Background of Fielding's Experience and his Characterization: The baffling diversity of Fielding in the sphere of characterization is due to his rich and wide experience. Further, the major strength of recalling, improving and presenting them in an artistic form depends upon his strong sensitivity. The different data collected by taking mental notes and reproducing them in great number shows his prodigious memory. Fielding is, evidently, the type of artist who has lived and moved in different social environments and different patterns of society. Leslie Stephen in his book *Hours in a Library* observes about it: "This knowledge is drawn from observation rather than intuitive sympathy. It consists in great part of those weighty maxims which a man of keen powers of observation stores up in his passage through a varied experience. It is the knowledge of Ulysses who has known "Cities of men", and manners, climates, councils, governments." Not only that he has "the knowledge of Machiavelli who has looked behind his screen of political hypocrisies." He is not an actor but a spectator who has witnessed the life with all its diversity. "In reading Fielding we are listening to remarks made by a spectator instead of an actor," says Leslie Stephen.

Digeon says that "he has a close and personal acquaintance with all classes of English society." He seems to have recorded environments like a camera "with its shutter open". The life that he led in Leyden, London, countryside gave him a good idea about it. Further various assignments in different capacities improved the store of his knowledge about society and men. His legal training and the legal acumen has served a great deal in comprehending the precision of life. W. S. Maugham's statement that the medical knowledge is essential for a writer is partly falsified by the type of experi-

ence Fielding has. It all depends upon the type of dealing with the human material. Fielding's legal equipment helps him to probe deeply into facts like a lawyer and imparts that objectivity which lends strength to his dispassionate comprehension of people. They come as cases before him, and when coloured with his artistic perception they come bustling with life.

4. Pairs of Characters with Paradoxical Traits: In *Tom Jones* Fielding has given pairs of characters with paradoxical traits. They have been contrasted, and individualised too, with sharp distinctions between them. Tom Jones has been contrasted with Blifil, Squire Western with Allworthy, Sophia with Molly Seagrim and Lady Bellaston, philosopher Squire with the moralist Thwackum.

Tom Jones embodies the essential human magnanimity and Blifil embodies all that is wicked. The former proves his worth inspite of his sexual deviation, and Blifil gives an evidence of his villainy. In this pair the good comes to face evil in life The former by his action and motive lays accent upon the sterling qualities of virtue, and the latter on the other hand, shows the villainy in human heart. Not only that it also proves that the professed virtue is nothing, but whatever is done and thought nobly is best. Mere surface politeness as in the case of Blifil is not enough. The right conduct determines the right character.

In another pair of characters we find Mr. Allworthy on one hand and Squire Western on another. The former is a normally good man, though a normal person according to W. S. Maugham is not a fit subject to be drawn by a novelist, though a certain dubious light of sexual deviation has been cast upon him, and the latter is an eccentric with all his strong likes and dislikes. Mr. Allworthy comes before us as 'a model of perfection' and Squire Western as a man who swings easily between the paroxysms of anger and delight.

In the domain of the female characters in *Tom Jones* the chaste Sophia stands in a strong contrast against Lady Bellaston and Molly Seagrim. She is morally and temperamentally superior to both of them. Though it is, certainly, a pity, as observed by J. B. Priestley, that Fielding's heroines

never quite become human beings. Any way that is not the point to be considered in this context. The point is about their paradoxical traits and as such Sophia has been drawn as a model of perfection, an ideal of feminine virtue. She is not intriguing like Lady Bellaston and not sophisticated either. Sexual deviations of Molly Seagrim would surely make her wince.

5. The Heroes and Heroines of Fielding: Richardson is superior to Fielding in the portrayal of female characters, but the latter in his histories surpasses him in making multidimensional approach in characterization. His hero is not introduced 'with a flourish of drums and trumpets'. He comes bouncing with the social handicaps and his heroines appear with 'the utmost solemnity and with an elevation of style.' Fielding in his prefatory chapter of *Book IV* of *Tom Jones* declares : "Our intention is short, is to introduce our heroine with the utmost solemnity in our power with an elevation of style."

His view about a hero is, really, astonishing. He does not belong to an aristocratic stock. Socially despicable he is yet he conducts himself so well in life. Walter Allen in his book entitled *The English Novel* writes about the hero in the following words: Tom Jones was a new kind of hero, one might say, the unheroic hero. He is handsome, brave, generous and well-meaning, it is true, but though his heart is at the right place his instincts are not always in his control. He is a depiction of ordinary weak man." But the hero like Tom Jones comes before us with all his transparent sincerity and honesty. He is also honest about his sexual deviations which a man would easily conceal. The hero is not above 'an average young man'. He is the product of the Eighteenth Century morality hence his sexual foible can be leniently considered. Walter Allen observes further about his sexual conduct in the following words: "It is not that Fielding approved of Jones's Sexual conduct, but he did believe, with many excellent theologians that other sins were graver than sexual irregularity, among them malice, cruelty, meanness, hypocrisy. He was as stern a moralist as Richardson, but he was much more generous one."

About the character of Sophia Western, Walter Allen remarks in the following words: "Fielding, it has become a cliche of criticism, was a man's man, and his heroines are women of a man's man. Sophia Western is scarcely likely to satisfy a feminist. But she is anything but a doll, and her behaviour shows that she is neither stupid nor passive." According to the same critic he follows a Shakespearean tradition in the portrayal of a heroine. "She is in the tradition of the Shakespearean heroine seen as a being at once inferior and superior to the male of the species, but equal never. This is to say that Fielding's conception of the relationship between the sexes was nearer to Shakespeare's than to ours. Fielding's most powerfully drawn heroine is Amelia."

He adheres to the Aristotlian dictum that the true source of the comic is the folly and failure of the people of the lower classes. His heroes are also drawn from that strata of society. Among the heroines Sophia's prototype is no one else but his wife Charlotte. It is said that while drawing Tom Jones he took himself to be his prototype, just as Crusoe reflects no one but Defoe himself.

6. **Aspects of Characterization**: We have already seen that his characters have been seen and painted from within. Further he makes an objective approach to the study of a character. His characters, though having universal traits, are the products of the century in which he lived. There are mixed characteristics in the characters painted by him, in the sense that he puts virtue besides vice. This type of blending is often seen in persons in real life. His characterization is a part of the psychological realism of which Fielding is a past master. Then he dominates his characters through the spirit of the comedy. The affectation, according to him, proceeds from two factors: vanity and hypocrisy. Characters in 'Tom Jones' achieve more verisimilitude than the characters in *Joseph Andrews*. Joseph has been called 'a foreshadow of his great heroes by virtue of his human qualities'. The central characters in his novels, says a critic, are not always the centre of interests. There are characters which have 'subtle souls' in his novels, but in Joseph Andrews there is

their dearth. "There are no portraits of subtle souls in *Joseph Andrews*." The strength of Fielding lies in his painting life-like characters and not mere abstractions. And what gives vivacity to the characters? It is surely his faculty of looking into the mind and heart of a character. He 'sees through their eyes and feels through their senses.' There are writers who have sympathy, and there are some who are endowed with the quality of empathy, but in Fielding we find both. He has an astonishing magnanimity about him when he judges a person, and at the same quick eye to probe deep into the psyche of a character. His characters are the products 'of a rich nature, a vivid imagination, and great powers of sympathy' Then the wide experience which he stores up helps him a great deal in delineating a rich variety of people taken from different sections of society, but for his comic purposes the persons drawn from the lower strata and of middle class are most potential.

The villains of Fielding are not unmitigated wicked denizens of the world. There might be an exception or two but mostly they are human beings first and villains afterwards. The same is applicable to Jane Austen also. Mr. Wickham of *Pride and Prejudice* is a soft villain. "His villains with a significant exception are never monsters. They have some touch of human emotion."

Fielding shows a 'masculine grasp of facts' while delineating a character or painting a social scene. "He is a great revealer of character", observes Saintsbury about Fielding. His characters have been marvellously differentiated. The individual idiosyncrasies and their social behaviour demarcate one from another. They are not types but individuals. Since he writes a prose epic, and a comic epic too, it is necessary that he must set his character, observes Oliver Elton, in fable on a large scale because it is the essence of the comic-epic. He is a creator of diverse souls, and every soul is different from each other. The disreputable characters have been treated in a compassionate manner in Fielding. In this sense he seems to span centuries, because W. S. Maugham in our time also does it.

The characters and plot are interrelated in the sense that

'plot takes its colouring from the characters'. Further a 'character is unfolded and momentum is given to his plot by direct, not reported conversations'. The plot dynamics depends largely upon the episode and at the centre of the episode there is a significant character. According to Gibbon Fielding has drawn 'exquisite picture of human manners'.

7. The Place of Human Nature in Characterization: Fielding is a keen student of human nature. In the prefatory chapter of *Book I* (*Tom Jones*) he makes it plain in the following words: "The provision, then, which we have here made is no other than Human Nature." He says further about it "that in human nature, though here collected under one general name, is such a prodigious variety." The writer seeks true nature. He is not satisfied with the idle romances. He writes about them in his *Book IV Chapter I* (*Tom Jones*): "As truth distinguishes our writings from those idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains." His study of human nature is superb. He has a good idea of a man. "Since it is often the same person who represents the villain and the hero; and he who engages your admiration today will probably attract your contempt tomorrow." He says further "A single bad act no more constitutes a villain life, than a single bad part on the stage." He has little use for the supernatural or the ideal ones. The ideal character like that of Allworthy has not been drawn powerfully by him.

As a student of human nature he finds man to be the fit subject for study. He writes about it in his *Book VIII Chapter I* (*Tom Jones*) in the following words: "Man therefore is the highest subject......which presents itself to the pen of our historian, or of the poet." As a student of human nature Fielding is a genius in his own words because by genius he understands those 'powers of mind, which are capable of penetrating into all things within our reach and knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences'. He is conversant with human nature and it is of a universal order because this conversation in our historian must be universal, that is, with all ranks and degrees of men.' The sources of learning the manners of mankind are, according to

him, experience with the wise, the good, the learned, and the polite. This understanding of human nature makes him rather a humanitarian. His conception of morality, which is of a radical nature, has been formed in the light of the study of man in varying circumstances. Are men not creatures of circumstance? The quintessence of his philosophy about human nature makes him conclude "it is easier to make good men wise than make bad men good." He has a great respect for human personality. It is because of his understanding human nature so well that he does not draw infallible characters.

8. The Prototypes of the Characters of Fielding : In Sophia Western Fielding, as noted elsewhere, draws his wife, and Amelia also shares her characteristics. It is said that Peter Pounce has analogous traits of one Peter Walter, a scrivener and usurer, of Stalbridge Park in Dorset, a neighbour of Fielding, though not a genial neighbour, at East Stour. Parson Adams bears close resemblance with Rev. William Young, a curate at East Stour. Fielding's early tutor, Mr. Oliver, curate provides material for Trulliber. In Tom Jones resides some of the writers traits. It is said that Thwackum has been drawn from Richard Hele, Vicar of a place near Salisbury, a prebendary of the cathedral, and a school master. Mr. Squire bears close resemblance to one called Thomas Chubb, a tradesman in the city. Mr. Dowling bears resemblance to one lawyer of Stillingfleet. The prototypes of Mr. Allworthy are said to be two persons-Ralph Allen and Lord Lyttelton. Lady Townshend has been drawn in the character of Lady Bellaston. The real folks whom he met in life became the grist for his mill of writing. The spirit of the comic and not of the burlesque has been maintained due to the material drawn from life, and that is one reason that he achieves verisimilitude of a high order as a realist.

9. Conclusion : The characters of Fielding portray his view of life. His characters are simple and not complex. He has amply succeeded in depicting men and not women. Some of his characters have been delineated with a certain 'fierce intensity.' As already noted he has drawn his characters, not all, from life. His characters are not flat, they are

dynamic having plenty of go about them. He does not succeed so well in depicting the upper class characters ; therein he deviates from his study of human nature and enters into a sort of intrigue as in the case of Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar. They do not suit his comic-epic. He has nothing to do with 'a model of perfection' and wherever he attempts it, as in the case of Mr. Allworthy, he does not succeed so well. His major strength lies in the delineation of characters from the lower and middle class strata of life. "His characters inhabit the same plan of reality." Unlike Smollett his characters have a large human background and depth. He is analytical in his approach and treats objectively. His characters bustle with a certain vitality, and he probes deep into them like a psychologist. His characters enjoy independence of personality. Fielding excels marvellously well in depicting droll characters. He like Dickens stamps his foot to quote Chesterton, and armies come out of earth. He has an amazing fecundity which makes Jane Austen blush for all her perfection.

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CHAPTER XII

FIELDING'S STYLE

There is no fixed pattern in the style of Fielding. It varies according to the situation. Sometime it becomes elaborate, sometime crisp and pointed and at occasions it takes a rambling form. While analysing the style of Fielding we come across his classical form, the flow of rhetoric, the simple language of the unsophisticated folks whom he describes particularly those of the inn-keepers, the poetry of Donne and Stuckling too creeps in the proper form of style conforming to the majesty of the subject matter.

1. The Classical Pattern: Fielding has shought to express himself, says a critic, in the 'classical form.' But the expressions of classical sublimity are not discovered at all places. It is seen only where he 'often goes back to Homer' or where he displays his learning to interpret common life through the medium of allusions. Therein he rises much higher from the level where he deals with the common folks of the inns. At such places he gives up his usual sensitivity of expression to embellish his subject. *Tom Jones* is indeed a classic, an epic poem in prose and so is *Joseph Andrews*. According to the view of Cross Fielding 'had in his mind the' Margites of Homer, which bore, Aristotle says, the same relation to Attic comedy as the 'Iliad' bore to Attic tragedy' (Quoted from Aristotle's '*Poetics*').

For instance the classical style can be easily perceived from the following excerpts:

"Hushed be every rudder breath. May the heathen ruler of the winds confine in iron chains the boisterous lims of noisy Boreas, and the sharp-pointed nose of bitter-biting Eurus. Do thou, sweet Zephyrus, rising from the fragrant bed, mount the western sky, and lead on those delicious

gales, the charm of which call forth the lovely Flora from her chamber, perfumed with pearly dews......"

In this manner Sophia is launched in the book. The elevated style, according to Fielding, is necessary to launch her with all 'solemnity.' But it is not applicable in the case of the hero found in the bed of Mr. Allworthy or on the street. The style varies according to the situation and expediency. Like Tom Jones, Joseph too finds himself in the arms of his beloved '......at last gave up her whole soul to Joseph and almost fainting in his arms, with a sigh infinitely softer and sweeter than any Arabian breeze......' He employs exotic similes and the highly attuned poetry for the purpose. At such places Fielding rises to a height which is often cloying but must have been so pleasing for the readers of his century.

2. Variation in Style for Describing the Commonplace: There is now a marked difference in the tone of the style when he comes to describe the commonplace objects and people. He at once descends from his lofty pedastal to shake hands with the common denizens of the earth. The tone becomes plain and expressive and often vulgar. His 'power of clear and classic expression' and 'the frankness, and bold brutality of his laughter' starts floating on the surface.

For instance the following will explain things concretely :

Coachman—"We have no time to look after dead men." "There was a man sitting upright, as naked as ever he was born." (Joseph Andrews.) Here we find the conversational ease in the style of Fielding.

His style gains rapidity while describing a character. His brush strokes work hurriedly and the impressions come off so vividly constituting the elements which go together in giving the total effect. He while describing Adams dwells upon him so rapidly : "Scholar, Greek and Latin language, Oriental tongues, French, Italian and Spanish, good sense and good parts, good nature......" His style undergoes a change while describing a character. Take the character

of Mrs. Slipslop : "......maiden gentlewoman of 45, made a small slip in her youth, short corpulent, pimpled, nose rather too large, eyes too little......" The impressions, by adopting this style, are formed rapidly and the picture of a man or woman becomes so graphically vivid.

While describing the commonplace occurance the prose halts a little, but it does not stop to gain a lofty tone. For instance :

'The horse of Adams borrowed from his clerk had a propensity of kneeling without giving any notice, the horse and he frequently rolling many paces distance, and afterwards, both getting up and meeting as good friends as ever'.

The style is most suited for describing a humorous situation reminding us of Don Quixote.

The instances of humour are varied and many and the style which he adopts also varies. Sometimes he proceeds by comparison. While showing the hypocrisy of Barnabas in *Joseph Andrews* he writes : 'Barnabas loved sermons no better than a grocer doth figs.'

Ordinarily it was not the style of Fielding 'to embellish, and correct, and heighten, and extra-decorate'. (*The English Novel* by George Saintsbury). His omniscience subdues the tone of his style. It makes him to wield the language in a natural manner. However, the traces of exaggeration are there, but only when he is in high spirits, otherwise his flow of prose is 'simple'. The dialogues in Fielding are pointed and can trace in them 'the finess and the ironical innuendoes'. In proper form he manifests his learning. 'He often goes back to Homer'.

As a story teller Fielding is straightforward and there is no confusion in his style. He 'commands directness' in his masterly narrative. Unclogging the story goes on often with the cunning of the artist.

3. **Style of writing Dialogues** : George Saintsbury writes about the style of Fielding with regard to his dialogues. It is as follows :

"But most of all is the regular process of vivifictaion visible in the dialogue. Fielding spirits the thing up—oxyates and ozonises the atmosphere and recognises the atmosphere and recognises the efficacy of dialogue as the revealer of character."

The dialogues of Fielding are said to be 'passionate'. The conversation between two characters is conducted with a certain force, and has a point in it which carries at once the matter home. The soul of a man is at once revealed. His dialogues are often unvarnished and are close to life. There are 'rough words,, simple and familiar gesture'.

The dialogues have been written in different styles, all depending upon the quality of emotion concerned. Fielding, recognising the form of the novel as different from the drama, conforms to the familiar tradition of style. Instead of making it ponderous and theatrical in expression he makes it run easy with all its conversational propriety. Though satirical yet he does not condemn things in 'flaring invectives', and his style does not embody his anger. Fielding, says Oliver Elton, rivals the irony of Swift. But he is not Swift and does not say that men are 'Yahoos'. He is lucid and forceful in expression. If there is touch of pedantry it can only be traced in his prefatory chapters. He is rhetorical only where he has to become classically elaborate comparing the common situations with those of the classics. Therein the learned allusions are found in an elevated style. Cross observes about his style in general : "His language was not free from the affectations of the romancers." According to him he was fond of 'nursery phrase'.

CHAPTER XIII

JOSEPH ANDREWS

1. Literary influences : While writing *Joseph Andrews* Fielding was working under certain literary influences. Referring to them Dudden has observed in *Henry Fielding—His Life, Works and Times* "The literary influences which operated on Fielding in the construction of *Joseph Andrews* were four.

"(*i*) First, of course, there was *Pamela*. Fielding began his novel with the intention of ridiculing—in a style different from that adopted in *Shamela*—Richardson's belauded masterpiece. Joseph Andrews, the hero of the tale, is introduced as 'brother to the illustrious Pamela, whose virtue is at present so famous'. He had been brought up in the service of Sir Thomas Booby of Somersetshire, uncle of Pamela's 'Mr. B.'; and at the time when the story opens he was footman to my lady, with a generous wage of £8 a year. Like Pamela, he was extremely good-looking; like her, again, he was dutiful to his parents, unblemished in his morals, and addicted to reading *The Whole Duty of Man* and other 'good books'. For this 'pretty fellow', with his musical voice, dark eyes, and carefully tended hair, Lady Booby conceived an indiscreet fancy, and, after the sudden death of her husband in London, actually endeavoured, by soft words and alluring gestures, to corrupt his innocence. Joseph, however, fortified by the example of the 'most adorable Pamela', and by the perusal of the beautiful letters which she had written home, firmly resisted his mistress's advances. To Pamela he wrote—in a letter clearly modelled on her own pious correspondence—'I don't doubt, dear sister, but you will have grace to preserve your virtue against all trials; and I beg you earnestly to pray I may be enabled to preserve mine......I hope I shall copy your example, and that of Joseph my

name-sake, and maintain my virtue against all temptations'. As a result of his chaste obduracy, the worthy young man was stripped of his livery and packed out of the house.

"In these opening scenes, as has been already pointed out, the main theme of Richardson's novel is ingeniously ridiculed by substituting for the temptation of Pamela by Mr. Booby the temptation of Pamela's brother by Mr. Booby's aunt. Fielding did not, however, proceed to a closer parody of the Pamela story, by making Joseph play of his manly charms on Lady Booby, and at last have his 'virtue rewarded' with his mistress's hand.

"Towards the close of *Joseph Andrews* Pamela herself makes her appearance in company with the reformed Booby, whom she has lately married. Here the mockery at Richardson is both subtle and penetrating. His sententious little heroine with the 'very strange name'—some pronounced it Pamela, and some Pamela—is represented by Fielding as a prim, pietistical, pragmatical young person, inordinately proud of her 'exalted condition'. Considering herself as by marriage a member of the superior class, she is ludicrously disdainful of inferiors. When Booby tries to dissuade Joseph from wedding a mere farm-girl, Pamela makes a characteristic contribution to the discussion.

> 'Brother,' said Pamela, 'Mr. Booby advises you as a friend; and no doubt my papa and mamma will be of his opinion, and will have great reason to be angry with you for destroying what his goodness hath done, and throwing down our family again, after he hath raised it. It would become you better, brother, to pray for the assistance of grace against such a passion than to indulge it.' 'Sure, sister, you are not in earnest; I am sure she is your equal, at least.' 'She was my equal,' answered Pamela; 'but I am no longer Pamela Andrews; I am now this gentleman's lady, and, as such, am above her. I hope I shall never behave with an unbecoming pride; but, at the same time, I shall always endeavour to know myself, and question not the assistance of grace to that purpose.'

"This is a fresh caricature of Richardson's principal figure. In *Shamela* she had been reshaped as an artful and disreputable hussy; in *Joseph Andrews* she is newly displayed as an eminently respectable but quite insufferable prig. It

is hard to say which of the parodies is the more effective. A parting hit at Richardson's dull continuation of his novel is dealt by Fielding in the last sentence of his own book, where he informs his readers that Joseph, now happily married, will remain in retirement, 'nor will be prevailed on by any booksellers, or their authors, to make his appearance in high life."

"The ridicule of *Pamela* is carried on through the first ten chapters of Book I of *Joseph Andrews*, and is again taken up in Chapter 4 of Book IV, when Mr. Booby arrives in a coach and six at Booby Hall, and presents to his aunt his young wife—'that charming Pamela, of whom I am convinced you have heard so much'. In the central portion of his novel, however, Fielding takes hardly any notice of Richardson's book. It may be that after composing the early chapters he came to the conclusion that the burlesque could not effectively be developed much further, and so deliberately abandoned it. But it seems, on the whole, more likely that after he had well begun his story he became so interested and absorbed in it as to forget his original plan of ridiculing *Pamela*. In any case, when once he had brought Joseph into contact with Parson Adams in 'The Dragon' inn, and had sent them adventuring together on the country roads, he ceased for a long while to concern himself with that novel. In the final chapters, however, after the conclusion of the journey-narrative or 'epic of the road', he found himself obliged to resume his burlesque of Richardson, that he might wind up his tale in general harmony with its beginning.

" (*ii*) A second, and more important, literary influence was *Don Quixote*. At the outset of his career as a novelist Fielding took Cervantes, above all others, as his master. He honestly described his own book as written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes' ; and the evidence of deliberate and extensive imitation is unmistakable.

In this connexion what most strikes us, perhaps, is the fact that the principal personage in *Joseph Andrews*—Parson Adams—is obviously modelled on Cervantes' hero. For years it had been Fielding's ambition to display the essential

spirit of Quixotism in an English form. This, however, he had not hitherto been able to achieve. It is true that in his play *Don Quixote in England* he had transplanted the Spanish knight, just as he is portrayed in the great romance, into English surroundings; but he had not ventured to attempt the far more difficult task of transmuting him into an Englishman. In *Joseph Andrews*, however, this transmutation is accomplished. In the beautifully drawn figure of the English country parson we are presented with a thoroughly English incarnation or embodiment of the basic idea of Cervantic Quixotism.

"The close resemblance between Quixote and Adams cannot fail to be remarked. Each is an honourable, high-minded, simple-hearted Christian gentleman, ardently devoted to ideals which are entirely unintelligible to the commonplace people round him. Each is a student of ancient books, interprets the world in the light of a bygone age, and is incapable of seeing contemporary persons and things as they really are. Each is accordingly scoffed at and victimized by the worldly-wise. Each, again, is animated by an abounding charity, and generously constitutes himself the champion of the weak and oppressed; each is indomitably brave and fearless, delights in fighting (in the literal sense) for a good cause, and is tough enough to stand drubbings; each has a pronounced taste for adventure, and meets with strange experiences in the course of his wanderings. Each, also, though often placed in ridiculous situations and subjected to unseemly usage, wonderfully retains his native dignity, and never for an instant forfeits our respect and sympathy. The resemblance is preserved even in minor details. Each of these heroes, for instance, is fifty years of age; each is long-legged and physically wiry; and each is associated in his travels with a humble companion. Even the knight's wretched steed, Rozinante, is matched by the weak-kneed horse, borrowed by the parson from his clerk, which 'had so violent a propensity to kneelings, that one would have thought it had been his trade, as well as his master's'. Of course, there are differences as well as similarities. Don Quixote views, the world and human life in the light of the romances of chivalry; Parson Adams, in the light of Homer and the classical poets. Don

Quixote is crazy; Parson Adams, though absent minded and very eccentric in his habits, is sturdily same. Don Quixote is melancholy and ascetic; Parson Adams, though he can be serious on occasion, is the most cheery of men, eats and drinks prodigiously and adores his pipe. Don Quixote is proud of his knightly prowess; Parson Adams is proud of his learning and preaching. Don Quixote, once more, is a devout Catholic layman, and unmarried; Parson Adams is a latitudinarian clergyman of the Church of England, with a wife and six children. These differences, however, do not affect the fundamental resemblance between the natures of the two men. Adams, in all essentials is another Quixote; and the spectacle of the impact of his idealistic personality on a world that has no knowledge of or interest in ideals is essentially the same spectacle that diverts us in Cervantes' masterpiece.

"Besides borrowing from *Don Quixote* the original conception of his hero, Fielding imitated Cervantes in several particulars—in the division of his novel into books and chapters, with appropriate chapter-headings; in the interpolation of digressive stories in the principal narrative; and in the description of rough-and-tumble, horseplay scenes. From Cervantes, too—though likewise from Scarron and Lesage—he took the general idea of an epic of the road, or story of a journey with curious adventures. Indeed, nothing could be plainer than that Fielding, throughout the composition of *Joseph Andrews*, was following the lead of the great Spanish author. It was not without reason that he himself was designated by one of his contemporaries as 'the English Cervantes'

"(*iii*) A third influence may be detected in the French realistic fiction of Scarron, Lesage, and Marivaux. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding indicated that he was acquainted with these three writers; and there can be no doubt that he learnt something from each of them.

"Scarron's *Roman comique*, with its vivid account of a company of strolling players, supplied with him a model of powerful realistic description based on accurate observation. It was Scarron, too—author of *L'Eneide travestie*, as well as

of the more famous *Roman comique*—who (in Scott's opinion, at any rate) inspired those mock-heroic passages in which Fielding delighted, wherein ridiculous or commonplace events are related in the stately language of the classical epic.

"Lesage's brilliant picaresque romance, *Gil Blas*—specially remarkable for the firmness of the character-drawings, for the humour with which the follies and vices of mankind are satirized, and for the moral purpose underlying the amusing whole—furnished another pattern. The excellences of this book must certainly have appealed to Fielding. He himself, it is interesting to note, possessed many of the qualities which characterized Lesage. He had the same intense interest in men and women; the same keen eye for morals and manners; the same rich vein of satiric humour; the same seriousness of intention at the back of liveliness and pleasantry; and the same tolerant outlook upon life. It was almost inevitable that he should have been influenced by a writer in whom he must have recognized a kindred spirit. But if he took Lesage as a model for general imitation, he refrained from copying him in details. There is, however, one incident in *Joseph Andrews*—the night visit made by Beau Didapper to Mrs. Slipslop by mistake—which is reminiscent of something similar recorded by Lesage, not indeed in *Gil Blas*, but in the partly translated from the Spanish, *Les Aventures de Guzman d' Alfarache*.

"It appears that Fielding also took hints from that interesting, but hardly great, contemporary writer, Pierre Carlet de Marivaux. The two famous novels of Marivaux, *Le Paysan Parvenu* and *La Vie de Marianne*, are referred to in *Joseph Andrews* with evident appreciation. The former story may have suggested to Fielding the idea, worked out in the early chapters of his own book, of a simple country lad brought to town, and there exposed to temptation by a sophisticated woman of the world. It was, further, at one time supposed that the incident of the identification of Joseph by means of a strawberry-mark on his left breast was borrowed from Marivaux's *Marianne*, where the heroine is identified by means of a strawberry-mark near her right eye. But this hypothesis is certainly mistaken. Marivaux left his

novel unfinished; and the scene of the recognition of Marianne by the strawberry was added by another hand, subsequently to the publication of *Joseph Andrews*. One feature, however, of Marivaux's art must surely have attracted Fielding's attention. This author was the originator of the novel of analysis, first achieving in France what Richardson a little later independently achieved in England. His subtle analysis of the processes of the human personality—and particularly of the feminine personality—though elaborated in an excessively mannerized style, was deservedly admired. Hence it seems probable, to say the least, that Fielding's description of the long conflict between pride and passion in the bosom of Lady Booby, and of the emotional storms which that conflict occasioned, was inspired by study of the ingenious psychological analysis of his French contemporary.

"(*iv*) Lastly, *Joseph Andrews* exhibits clear traces of the influence of Moliere—pre-eminently the satirist of shams and affectations, whom Fielding in his playwright days had specially admired and copied. For instance, the definition in the English novel of the function of satire – namely, to offer a criticism not of persons but of manners, which, however, would serve as a 'glass' wherein each individual, though not personally attacked, might see his own faults and shortcomings reflected—is unquestionably based on a passage in Moliere's *Critique del' Ecole des Femmes;* the sham-learned gibberish of the doctor at 'The Dragon' inn is an imitation of the nonsensical jargon of Sganarelle in *Le Medecin malgre lui*; and the notable conversation between the poet and the player, beginning in compliments and ending in abuse, is evidently modelled on the Trissotin Vadius dialogue in *Les Femmes savantes*. One favourite trick of Moliere was to surprise and amuse by exhibiting a ludicrous contradiction between the theory and the action of a character ; as when, in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, he makes the professor of philosophy declaim against anger and almost immediately fall into a violent rage. This mirth-making device was imitated by Fielding not only in the passage where Adams denounces 'the folly of growing warm in disputes', and within a few minutes becomes involved in a heated argument which threatens to

develop into a downright quarrel, but also in several other places in his book."

2. **Characterization**: In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding shows himself as a master of the art of delineating characters. Referring to the characters in the novel, Dudden has observed in *Henry Fielding—His Life, Works and Times*: "*Joseph Andrews* is a novel of adventure; but it is also pre-eminently and chiefly a novel of character. The adventures, it is true, are well invented and well described; but it may be doubted whether many nowadays would read this 'history' for the sake of the adventures alone. The adventures, in fact, are of secondary importance. They are there not for their own sake, but as skilfully contrived machinery for displaying and setting off the characters. It is the characterization that is the capital feature of the book."

Parson Adams: "Of all the characters in the novel, Parson Abraham Adams is indisputably the most outstanding. That agreeable young man, Joseph, may be the centre of the plot; but it is the 'old foolish parson' that is the centre of interest. Adams is at once most original of the characters—'not to be found', says the author, 'in any book now extant'—and the most richly and consummately wrought. In inventing him, Fielding had his eye on two models—the Don Quixote of Cervantes, and his own living friend, the Reverend William Young. But, while he kept these exemplars in view, he did not literally copy either. Working on the materials which they furnished, his imagination evloved the strikingly new conception of the absent-minded scholar-parson—'a character of perfect simplicity', and at the same time, notwithstanding his homeliness and oddity, of singular goodness, distinction, and charm. This character—the prototype of Sterne's 'my uncle Toby', of Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose, and of Thackeray's Colonel Newcome, incontestably takes rank among the immortals of English fiction. In the opinion of Scott, the creation of Parson Adams 'alone is sufficient to stamp the superiority of Fielding over all writers of his class.'

"Mr. Adams was a strange-looking being. He had a 'comical' face, with bearded chin and deeply wrinkled cheeks;

a fist 'rather less than the knuckle of an ox', with a wrist 'which Hercules would not have been ashamed of', and legs so long that they almost touched the ground when he rode on horse-back. His muscular frame was attired in a tattered old cassock, partially covered by a short great coat, which reached but half-way down his thighs. On his head he wore a periwig (which at night he turned inside out, and bound to his scalp with a red spotted handkerchief), and an ancient hat, which, so far from having a black hatband, had nothing black about it'. In his hand he carried a stout crabstick. So shabby was his appearance that strangers were liable to mistake him for a thimblerigger or a pig-dealer, and Lady Booby refused to admit him to her dinner-table. Perhaps her ladyship was not entirely unjustified in this exclusion ; for, apart from other drawbacks, the parson had various uncouth mannerisms—such tricks as snapping his fingers, striding or capering about the room when excited, fetching deep groans when grieved or shocked, and shouting 'Heureka, heureka !' when a happy idea struck him—nor was his behaviour at table always of a kind that would commend him to the fastidious.

"Though fifty years of age, Adams was magnificently strong and healthy. He had an unfailing appetite, drank immense quantities of ale, and was an inveterate smoker. He was extremely fond of walking—preferring, as he quaintly put it, 'the pedestrian even to the vehicle expedition'—and pursued his favourite exercise with surprising vigour. With his great strides he could outdistance a heavy stage-coach or a rider on horseback with a woman on the pillion ; he boasted that he was capable of keeping up, for a mile at any rate, with a coach and six. Constitutionally tough, he cared nothing for a wetting, or for a drubbing, or for a tumble from his horse, or for rolling down a steep declivity from top to bottom, or for sitting up for the whole of a night. In aid of the weak, or in self-defence, he would clench his huge fists, and if necessary, engage in physical combat. Once he laid a churlish inn-keeper sprawling on the floor ; again, he knocked out a fellow who was molesting a young girl ; on another occasion he was hardly prevented from sallying forth to thrash a brutal squire ; he administered a duckling to a practical joker who had ventured to take liberties with him, and, when

attacked at 'The New Inn' by superior numbers, he 'fought like a madman'. With Joseph's assistance he was even prepared to engage a whole hunt. In general, he seems really to have enjoyed such rough encounters, but he made it a rule never to strike a blow unless an assault had first been made on himself or his friends.

"This unconventional parson was only a curate, and as such was regarded by the Boobies as no more than 'a kind of domestic', belonging to the non-resident rector. He inhabited the parsonage in Sir Thomas Booby's parish, but had charge of three chapelries besides, and preached every Sunday in all four churches. In remuneration of his service he received a handsome stipend of £23 a year—'which, however, he couldnot make any great figure with, because he lived in a dear country and was a little encumbered with a wife and six children.'

"He was an excellent, if somewhat autocratic, parish priest. He looked on 'those whom God had entrusted to his cure' as 'his children', while they, on their side, regarded him with affection as 'an indulgent parent'; but 'his word was little less than a law in his parish', the villagers being expected to consult him on all matters of importance, and to act in conformity, with his counsel. In doctrine he was a latitudinarian, and a disciple of Bishop Hoadly. In practice, however, he was something of a high churchman. He conducted services on saints' days, insisted on strict observance of 'the forms of the Church' (particularly in respect of the publication of banns of marriage) and took an exalted view of his sacred office. 'It was his maxim, that he was a servant of the Highest, and could not, without departing from his duty, give up the least article of His honour or of His cause to the greatest earthly potentate. Indeed, he always asserted that Mr. Adams at church with his surplice on, and Mr. Adams without that ornament in any other place, were two very different persons.'

"Despite his appearance of rusticity, this good parson was a man of extraordinary learning. Educated at the University of Cambridge, he had made himself familiar with many languages, and, in particular, had acquired a masterly knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics. He could lecture

on Homer like a university professor ; he could illustrate his sentiments with apposite reference to Theocritus or Apollonius Rhodius, to Virgil or Horace ; he could spout quotations from the Stoic moralists. His favourite author was Aeschylus, whose writings afforded him perpetual food for meditation in his leisure moments. With his own hand he had transcribed a copy of the Aeschylean tragedies, which he carried about with him everywhere for upwards of thirty years, until, one night, on a sudden alarm, he accidentally flung 'his dear friend' into the fire. Of modern literature, however—except for a few books of divinity—this learned classicist knew next to nothing. The history of the last thousand years was to him almost a blank. He had never read the works of Shakespeare, or any of the admired productions of Mr. Pope. The only English tragedy with which he was acquainted was Addison's *Cato ;* and the only English comedy which he thought fit for a Christian's perusal was Steele's *Conscious Lovers*. The newspapers he entirely neglected ; he had never so much so heard of that widely distributed periodical, *The Daily Gazetteer*.

"In the by-gone world of classical books Adams lived and moved and had his being. So completely engrossed in it was he, that for him it had come to be almost literally the only world. Just as Don Quixote imagined himself living in the vanished world of chivalry, so Adams imagined himself living in the vanished world of Greece and Rome. Of the real world of his own day the simple-minded scholar was as ignorant 'as an infant just entered into it could possibly be'. The devious ways of contemporary mankind were quite beyond his comprehension. Of the insolence and ill-nature of a female of the Slipslop breed he had no more idea 'than the cat which sat on the table'. He could not believe that anyone could be so wicked as to belie the character of a neighbour out of spite. It did not occur to him to suspect that a man and woman might live together without being married. Hypocrites he never detected. Even a slip of a girl could throw dust in his eyes, for he 'never saw farther into people than they desired to let him.' It was inevitable, of course, that a being so guileless should constantly be imposed on. Again and again was Adams taken in—now

by the rant and bluster of a pseudo-patriot ; now by the pious platitudes of a hypocritical brother-parson ; now by the smiles and promises of an engaging fraud ; now by an absurd tale (that of 'a favourite diversion of Socrates') gravely propounded by a mischievous wag. In the course of his wanderings on the road he did indeed experience some rude awakenings. He was amazed and horrified to discover so much cruelty, perfidy, and profigacy in fair-spoken, well-mannered, and seemingly right-living men and women. 'Good Lord !' he exclaimed on one occasion, 'what wickedness is there in the Christian world ! I profess almost equal to what I have read of the heathens'. Yet, in spite of the shocks which he received, he retained to the end his optimistic faith in the essential goodness of human nature.

"Adams's absorption in the world of Greek and Latin books had a further curious result. Fielding puts it mildly when he says that he was 'a little inclined to forgetfulness'. In plain words, he was the most absent-minded of men. This peculiarity was not due to 'want of parts'. Adams had plenty of sense ; but he was so taken up with his own thoughts, and with ruminating on what he had read, that he seldom troubled to pay attention to the practical details of everyday life. Thus, he was constantly forgetting or mislaying things. He started for London to sell his sermons, and not till he had accomplished half the journey did he discover that the precious manuscripts had been left behind. At one inn he forgot to settle the account for his horse's keep ; from another he marched away completely forgetting the horse itself ; when, later on, the beast was restored to him, he did not recognize it, but being reminded that he had left it in the stable of the inn, cried 'Bless me ! and so I did'. He was affronted by Peter Pounce, and lept impetuously out of the chariot, forgetting his hat ; he quarrelled with Parson Trulliber, and quitted his house in anger, forgetting both hat and great-coat. His capacity for missing his way and losing himself was wonderful. If ever it was barely possible for a human creature, rambling in the country, to mistake the road, Parson Adams was dead certain to do so. If, even in a house, to reach a particular room, it was necessary to turn right, Parson Adams was sure to take the turning to the left.

No less wonderful was his capacity for overlooking what no person, less preoccupied, could fail to notice. Once he came to a flooded stretch of road, and waded through the water up to his middle ; only when he reached the other side did he observe a footpath behind the hedge, on which he might have passed dry-shod. Another time he actually proposed to swim a river which obstructed his course. It was pointed out to him, however, that, since there was a village on the further bank, there must certainly be somewhere a bridge leading thereto. 'Odso, that's true indeed', he said ; 'I did not think of that.'

"The absent-minded scholar had other peculiarities. His style of speech was old-fashioned and oddly stilted ; and when he got going on any topic, he was apt to the exceedingly 'prolix' and 'circumstantial'. Pedantically exact in his own statements, he never let slip an opportunity of correcting an error made by others—whether it were the mispronunciation of a name, or a mistake about procedure, or the misquotation of a line of Ovid. His curiosity was insatiable ; indeed, his 'ears were the most hungry part about him.' Nothing pleased him better to listen to a story, and he always insisted on being given the fullest and minutest details. 'Madam,' he would interject, 'if it be not impertinent, I should be glad to know how this gentleman was dressed'. 'Sir, your remarks if you please.' He would also throw out startling questions. 'Pray, Sir, what is a coquette?' 'Pray, where's the Levant?'

"Adams had three innocent vanities. First, though ignorant as a child of the ways of the world, he flattered himself that, because he had read many books, he had a profounder knowledge of human nature and human life than any of the experienced, but unlettered people, whom he encountered. 'Knowledge of men', he insisted, 'is only to be learnt from books ; Plato and Seneca for that'. Secondly, he was proud of his sermons, which he fondly imagined that he would be able to sell for a very large—'indeed an immense' —sum of money. He was particularly vain of sermon against vanity, which he thought his master-piece, and regretted that he did not always carry it in his pocket, that he might read it to admiring hearers. Thirdly, and most of

all, he was vain of his competence as a schoolmaster. He had in his parish a little school, where he taught the village lads himself, giving special attention to their instruction in morals and religion. And never in his opinion, had there been a teacher so excellent. 'Indeed, if this good man had an enthusiasm, of what the vulgar call a blind side, it was this ; he thought a schoolmaster the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest of all schoolmasters ; neither of which points he would have given up to Alexander the Great at the head of his army.'

"With all his cranks and foibles, Parson Adams is displayed as a singularly noble personality. To him might be applied Fielding's phrase about Goerge Lillo: 'He had the spirit of an old Roman, joined to the innocence of a primitive Christian.' He was indeed one of those rare beings who are good spontaneously, with no apparent strain or effort. Goodness was his element. Generous to excess, he was ever ready to divide his last shilling with a friend, or even with a needy stranger. 'Sir', said he, to the Popish priest, 'if I had the greatest sum in the world—aye, if I had ten pounds about me—I would bestow it all to rescue any Christain from distress.' And in truth, without counting charity (which he called 'laying up a treasure in heaven'), there was nothing he would not do, no inconvenience he would not put up with, to succour and comfort the unfortunate. Though friendly with all, he specially loved very poor and humble people, and, as the follower of One who seemed to prefer the poor, did not consider it a 'condescension' to associate familiarly with such. His integrity was incorruptible. 'Though I am a poor parson,' he affirmed, 'I will be bold to say I am an honest man, and would not do an ill thing to be made a bishop'. For righteousness sake he was prepared to make sacrifices and endure sufferings. Once Lady Booby ordered him to do what was unlawful, threatening, if he declined, to recommend his 'master' (the rector) to discharge him from his 'service'.

Madam, (answered Adams) I know not what your ladyship means by the terms 'master' and 'service'. I am in the service of a Master who will never discard me for doing my duty ; and if the doctor (for indeed I have never been able to pay for a

> licence) thinks proper to turn me from my cure, God will provide me, I hope, another. At least, my family, as well as myself, have hands; and He will prosper, I doubt not, our endeavours to get our bread honestly with them. Whilst my conscience is pure, I shall never fear what man can do unto me.

"It is this sterling goodness—this perfect truthfulness, uprightness, unselfishness, high-mindedness—that imparts to the character of Adams peculiar beauty and distinction. The rustic parson in his ragged cassock, enjoying his mug of ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen, is certainly an exquisitely humorous figure; but, though he often makes us smile, he never ceases to command our respect. Even in humiliating situations Adams himself is not humiliated. From his testing adventures and experiences he emerges with his sweet temper unsoured, his honourable character unsullied, and his innate diginity unimpaired.

"Parson Adams was Fielding's most beloved clergyman, whom he would not entirely drop, even when *Joseph Andrews* was finished and published. From time to time, in his later writings, he went out of his way to bring this favourite character in. But Adams, if the best, was by no means the only clerical personage of his invention. He appears to have been singularly interested in the clerical order—we may recall his 'Apology for the Clergy' in *The Champion*—and in his novels he introduced a remarkable assortment of clerical types. Some of these figures are elaborately portrayed, others are lightly sketched in a few sentences.

"In *Joseph Andrews*, besides Parson Adams, as many as five clergymen, distinguished by different characteristics, are either depicted or incidentally referred to.

"The negligent type of ecclesiastic is represented by Parson Barnabas, renowned as a compounder of punch, who, repudiating the mischievous insinuation of Whitefield 'that a clergyman ought to be always preaching and praying', spends most of his time smoking and gossiping with his cronies in the kitchen of 'The Dragon' inn. A still less commendable type is exemplified in the coarse bodied, coarse-minded brute, the Reverend Mr. Trulliber, grown rich by successful hog-breeding, but much too mean to lend four-

teen shillings to a brother-clergyman in distress. The picture drawn of this corpulent boor, clad in an 'old nightgown' (*i.e.*, dressing-gown), and greedily gobbling up his breakfast of porridge and ale, while his down-trodden drudge of a wife waits meekly behind her 'master's' chair, is not attractive. Again, the ignorance of many of the clergy is illustrated by the country parson, who putting on his spectacles and gravity together' pronounces Adams's *Aeschylus* to be a manuscript of one of the Fathers, and a very fine piece of antiquity. 'Aye, aye, question and answer; the beginning is the catechism in Greek.' Once more, we are told of a litigious parson —Adams' rector—who had lived for many years 'in a constant state of civil war, or, which is perhaps as bad, of civil law' with his tithe-payers, on the question of a claim made by the latter to a 'modus' (*i.e., a modus decimandi*, or substitution of a fixed money payment for the tithe of the produce). By allowing the claim the rector would have been several shillings a year out of pocket; by resisting it at law he had had the pleasure—which he used often to say was no small one—of ruining many of the poor tenants, though he had at the same time greatly impoverished himself. Finally, there is the proud incumbent, who seemed to consider his poor people as belonging to some inferior species. On Sundays he might have been seen 'strutting along the churchyard, like a turkey-cock, through rows of his parishioners', who bowed to him with much submission, but whose presence and salutes he never condescended to acknowledge.

"It must be added that Fielding's interesting series of clerical characters is continued in his later novels. Thus, in *A Journey from this World to the Next* we are shown the pompous pluralist, who allowed a poor family to starve; in *Jonathan Wild*, the scandalous Ordinary of Newgate; in *Tom Jones*, the intolerant bigot, Thwackum, and the hungry parasite Supple; in *Amelia*, the excellent Dr. Harrison—except Adams, Fielding's most finished clerical figure—the ill-fated curate Bennet, Mrs. Bennet's austere father, Mr. Bennet's peevish rector, and the incumbent who unscrupulously broke his solemn promise to surrender a good living.

Mrs. Slipslop—"Next after Parson Adams, the most original character in *Joseph Andrews* is Mrs. Slipslop—Lady Booby's 'waiting-gentlewoman.' This short, stout, red-faced, pimply female of forty-five, with a big nose, little eyes, and a bearded chin, was endowed by Nature with an amorous disposition and a peculiarly vile temper. The former, particularly when inflamed by cordials, was apt to incite her to excessively vivacious sallies. The latter she vented on the lower servants, in dealing with whom she had acquired 'an excellent knack' of delivering cuffs in the face with a good grace. All humble people she treated with offensive arrogance. With Parson Adams, however—being herself the daughter of a curate—she condescended to converse; but 'always insisted on a deference to be paid to her understanding', since she had often been in London, and therefore presumed to have more knowledge of the world than a mere country parson could pretend to. Of Adam's proficiency in Latin she observed : 'It is very proper that you clergymen must learn it, because you can't preach without it; but I have heard gentlemen say in London, that it, is fit for nobody else'.

"The conversation of this woman is always entertaining; partly as the expression of that curious compound of ignorance, vulgarity, and vanity which constituted 'the Slipslop-mind', and partly on account of that ludicrous verbal bungling, which characterised the Slipslopian speech. For Mrs. Slipslop was 'a mighty affecter of hard words', and had further a trick, exceedingly puzzling to her auditors, of substituting for the word which she aimed at using another word of similar sound but dissimilar signification. Thus she was apt to come out with startling phrases, such as the following: 'how have I deserved that my passion should be resulted (insulted) and treated with ironing (irony)?'; 'she who hath not compulsion (compassion) for thee is a Myhummetman (Mahometan), and I will maintain it' ; want of shame was not the curreycuristic (characteristic) of a clergyman'; (he behaved) 'in such a manner that infected (affected) everybody who saw him' ; 'those nasty creatures, who are a scandal to our sect (sex)'; 'your ladyship talks of servants as if they were not born of the Christian specious (species)......I can't perceive my dears (ideas) are coarser than other people's ; 'I had

not time to inquire about particles (particulars)'. Mrs. Slipslop talked of making an 'oppression' when she meant making an 'impression', used 'assassinate' as the equivalent of 'insinuate', and babbled of 'the incese (essence) of matter', 'a fragrant (flagrant) crime', 'a virulent (violent) death.' Such comical misapplication of words is found in Shakespeare and Cervantes, and Fielding himself had already furnished instances of it in *Shamela*. Mrs. Slipslop, however, is the most notable early example of a ridiculously deranged vocabulary. In this respect she is the precursor of Smollett's Tabitha Bramble and of Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop".

Lady Booby—"The character of Lady Booby, Slipslop's mistress, has not always been adequately appreciated. Some critics have viewed her merely as a type of the dissolute woman of fashion, and have inconsiderately placed her in the same category with Lady Bellaston. But Lady Booby's personality is far more complex and interesting than the Bellaston's. Sensual though she was, there was a great deal more to her than sensuality. She had a spirit and an intelligence that belied her name. Her will was as strong and imperious as that of Mrs. Diana Western; and, though mature, she possessed something of that power of fascinating men which characterized Miss Fanny Matthews.

"Lady Booby was intensely proud of her position as a woman of fashion and a leader of London society. Unfortunately she conceived an indiscreet liking for her handsome young footman, whom at first she indulged in 'innocent freedoms', and later tried (though unsuccessfully) to beguile into freedoms which were very far from innocent. Frustration of her wishes only aggravated her flame. She now realized—not without horror—that she was seriously enamoured of a man who was vastly her inferior in intellect as well as in station, and with whom she could not openly connect herself without sacrificing her place in society and most cherished social ambitions. Then followed a distracting inner conflict between pride and passion, wherein passion eventually triumphed. Though she was perfectly aware of the extreme folly of her conduct—for never throughout the struggle was her reason lulled to sleep—the lady determined to marry Joseph.

To compass that end, she used all her wits and arts, not shrinking even from the wickedness of plotting the ruin of the innocent young girl whom Joseph loved. Again, however, her passion was baffled. The disappointment at first affected her very painfully; but she had too much sense, or was too much a woman of the world, to allow a mere temporary infatuation to spoil her life. In a little while eternal card-parties, and the gratifying attentions of a captain of dragoons, obliterated from her mind the memory of Joseph.

"With the conflict between pride and passion in the bosom of Lady Booby we may, perhaps, compare the conflict between miserly meanness and the desire to be looked up to as a person of affluence and importance in the breast of Peter Pounce. The antagonistic elements in the personality of that shifty sinner, who professed comparative poverty, that he might not be asked to give anything to charity, yet bragged of his riches, that he might share the respect accorded to the ancient and opulent country families, are agreeably exposed in 'a curious dialogue' between Mr. Pounce and Parson Adams, which Fielding deemed 'better worth reading than all the works of Colley Cibber'."

Others—"Of Joseph and Fanny, the nominal hero and heroine of the novel, not much need be said. They are pleasing, but not humorous or particularly striking, figures. Joseph—described by Sarah Fielding as an incarnation of 'rural innocence'—is a manly and sensible fellow ; but he does not excite the interest inspired by the somewhat similar, though, far less estimable, Tom Jones. Fanny, again, with her fresh bloom, pretty shyness, and sweet smile, is charming in a simple way. Decked in her wedding finery—white gown, round-eared cap, and straw hat lined with cherry-coloured silk, and tied with cherry-coloured ribbon – she presents a dainty picture. But the plump little rustic beauty, whose limited natural capacities had not been developed by even the most rudimentary education, cannot for a moment be compared with such heroines as Sophia Western and Amelia Booth. Fielding had still to learn the art of delineating a female character, which should combine intelligence and strength of purpose with goodness, intrepid spiritedness, and gracious charm.

"Flitting in and out among the principal personages in the book, we observe a large number of minor characters, of various kinds and descriptions. They appear and disappear, often remaining within view for only a few moments; yet almost all of them, however brief may be their appearance on the scene, deserve attention. Of these finely sketched figures, however—each, even the most insignificant, distinctly and firmly characterized—only a few examples need be mentioned. We may pick out from the crowd the waggish surgeon, boldly claiming that he had got Galen and Hippocrates by heart, and seldom went abroad without both of them in his pocket ('pretty large books', quoth Parson Adams); the 'paltry little gentlewoman,' Miss Grave-airs, obstinately refusing to 'demean herself' to ride with a footman in the stage-coach; the stolid old countryman, Gaffer Andrews, who, on the recovery of his long-lost daughter, 'testified no remarkable emotion', but after blessing and kissing her, 'complained bitterly that he wanted his pipe, not having had a whiff that morning'; the blustering sportsman who would have all cowards hanged, but turned tail and bolted on hearing the shrieks of a girl attacked by a robber; the worthy constable, Tom Suckbribe, whose constant maxim was 'that a wise man never refused money on any conditions', and who practised his principle at every election by selling his vote to both parties; the little hopping thing, Beau Didapper, with his narrow shoulders and spindle shanks, who, when Horace was quoted, observed that 'he did not understand Welsh': the huntsman, who after the hunting of Parson Adams, said that he 'wondered his master would encourage the dogs to hunt Christians', since 'it was the surest way to spoil them, to make them follow vermin instead of sticking to a hare'; that 'very good sort of woman, only rather too strict in economics', Mrs. Adams, who, in her differences with her husband, 'had always the last word everywhere but at church'; and little Dick Adams—the first of the children depicted by Fielding—bravely struggling, under his father's prompting, to translate the Latin imperative Lege. These individuals, with many others who cannot for lack of space be noticed, compose a fascinating company. No such varied collection of convincingly natural figures had hitherto been exhibited in English literature."

General Estimate of the Novel : Giving an estimate of *Joseph Andrews*, Kettle has observed in *An Introduction to the English Novel* : "No one could maintain that *Joseph Andrews* has too much plot. Indeed, in so far as plot has the function of holding together the subject-matter in an organized way, it has too little. It is held together, not by a story but by certain themes and also, in a subtle way, by its basic form, that of a journey. The journey of Joseph and Adams from London to Lady Booby's country seat has a certain symbolic quality about it : it is a journey not simply of adventure but of discovery. Now this use of journey as some kind of a symbol of man's life and striving is, of course, common in literature. It is not always easy to say precisely why some of the journeys of literature—those, for instance, of Ulysses, of Don Quixote, of Robinson Crusoe, of Joseph Andrews—achieve a symbolic significance, while others—those of Roderick Random, of Gil Blas, of David Balfour in *Kidnapped*, of Tom Jones—do not. Clearly the question is one involving the total organization of the books concerned. In so far as in the journey certain moral discoveries are involved the journey does itself symbolize a striving for clarity ; the rhythms of the journey become identified with (as in the Odyssey) or in some obscure way hint at (as in *Crusoe* or *Joseph Andrews*) the rhythms of life itself.

"The central theme of *Joseph Andrews*, as of *Don Quixote*, is anti-romance, the showing-up of the dangers and inadequacies of romantic attitudes and the assertion of a human realism. And *Joseph Andrews*, like *Don Quixote*, contains elements of burlesque which it is wrong to exaggerate. Richardson's *Pamela* is burlesqued throughout : Joseph protecting his virginity from the onslaughts of Lady Booby is a situation which only the reader of romance will fully appreciate ; but Fielding's intention goes far beyond burlesque. In an interesting passage in his Preface he associates himself with Hogarth and remarks, 'He who should call the ingenious Hogarth a burlesque painter would, in my opinion, do him very little honour.' To recognize the inadequacy of seeing *Joseph Andrews* merely as a burlesque of *Pamela* one has only to compare it with *Shamela*, which has uproariously, no further intention.

"*Shamela* has, of course, no Parson Adams, and Adam's importance in *Joseph Andrews* is central, not because he is a well-done 'character' (though he is that), but because he raises Fielding's anti-romantic criticism far above a mere commonsense repudiation of Richardson's moral pornography. Just as Quixote is wildly impractical—his head filled with romantic ideas of honour and chivalry—and yet humane, so is Adams—his mind stuffed with the classics and Platonic philosophy—always coming into the sharpest conflict with hard facts. He loses his way, forgets he has no money, sleeps when he should be awake, fights his imaginary windmills (who turn out to be lads of the village engaged in the sport of bird-batting) : and, like Quixote, he is a better man than those who do him down.

"In the conflicts of the novel—which are always those of humanity *versus* hypocrisy and bogus morality—Adams, for all his idealistic impracticability, is always on the right side. A consideration of charity is one of the recurring themes of the book. Adams's discussion with Peter Pounce, the steward is typical.

> 'I thank God I have a little', replied the other, 'with which I am content and envy no man : I have a little, Mr. Adams, with which I do as much good as I can'. Adams answered. That riches without charity were nothing worth ; for that they were a blessing only to him who made them a blessing to others.—'You and I', said Peter, 'have different notions of charity. I own, as it is generally used, I do not like the word, nor do I think it becomes one of us gentlemen : it is a mean parson-like quality : though, I would not infer many parsons have it neither.' 'Sir,' said Adams, 'my definition of charity is, a generous disposition to relieve the distressed'.—'There is something in that definition', answered Peter, 'which I like well enough ; it is, as you say, a disposition, and does not so much consist in the act as in the disposition to do it ; but alas! Mr. Adams, who are meant by the distressed? Believe me, the distresses of mankind are mostly imaginary, and it would be rather folly than goodness to relieve them'. 'Sure, sir', replied Adams, 'hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and other distresses which attend the poor, can never be said to be imaginary evils'.

There is nothing casual about this dialogue. The theme has already been introduced early on by appalling Mrs. Towwouse, whose views are vigorous :

> 'Common charity' said she ; 'common charity teaches us to provide for ourselves, and our families ; and I and mine won't be ruined by your charity, I assure you'.

and it is taken up again by Joseph, who soliloquises (sending Adams to sleep), contrasting charity with honour.

"The conversation with Peter Pounce is an admirable example not only of the vigour of Fielding's dialogue, but of the subtlety of his dialectic. Pounce begins with a typical, apparently commonsense, materialist definition of charity. But by the end of the dialogue his materialism is revealed as an empty idealism ('the distresses of mankind are mostly imaginary'), while the impractical idealist Adams is left asserting the reality of hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness.

"It is this kind of insight, which goes beyond a mere hearty sympathy for what is decent and dislike of what is hypocritical, that gives *Joseph Andrews* its quality. But neither should we undervalue the sheer commonsense decency and strong (albeit unsubtle) moral concern which is at the basis of Fielding's vision. In the continual conflicts in *Joseph Andrews* around the theme of charity, conflicts in which Adams and Joseph are always in trouble, generally because they have no money, it is interesting that the unkind are invariably the great and fashionable and lustful, the mercenery and servile and hypocritical—the Mrs. Slipslops and Parson Trullibers—while the kind are the humble people—the postilion who gives Joseph his cloak, the common soldier who pays the bill at the inn, the farmer who has seen through the ways of the world. If we stop to analyse the pervading sense, in Fielding's novels, of generous humanity (and it is, when all is said, the dominant quality of his books), we shall find that it springs not from a vague, undifferentiated bonhomie but from a very explicit social awareness and understanding of the people. Nor is it a sentimental view. The common people in Fielding's novels are often cruel, stupid ignorant, bestial. But they are human beings and he doesn't despise them.

"How far Fielding has come from the picaresque school is well illustrated in *Joseph Andrews* in his use of the interpolated tale. Twice the narrative is held up while an

unimportant character relates a long tale which has no obvious connection with the novel—a device frequently used by the picaresque writers. But in fact both *Leonora* (the first of these tales) and Mr. Wilson's story do contribute to the plan of *Joseph Andrews*; neither is a mere casual interlude. Not only do the two tales contrast with and balance each other, both provide variations on the main themes of the book : romance, charity, and love. The *Leonora* story is not just a crude homily on the evil consequences of Leonora's conduct ; its important purpose is that it allows Fielding to comment on the inadequacy of conception of such a story. *Leonora* has all the crudities, moral and technical (including the idiotic letters got by heart) of a *Pamela.* Fielding is not presenting it to us for our approval. (Such a phrase as 'the refinement of your mind . . . . ' with which a Leonora's reply to Horatio's entirely artificial love-letter opens, bears an immense weight of irony.) *Leonora* underlines the incipient immortality of Pamela's attitude to love. Mr. Wilson's story fills in more of the picture, telling us something of the world of the Booby's that needs, for the pattern of the novel, to be told.".

CHAPTER XIV

TOM JONES

1. Plot of Tom Jones : The plot of *Tom Jones* has been admired by all critics. 'What a master of composition Fielding was!' exclaimed Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 'Upon my word I think the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones*, the three most perfect plots ever planned'. In the opinion of Scott *Tom Jones* was 'the most masterly example of an artful and well-told novel'. 'Fielding', he wrote, 'in most of his novels, but especially in *Tom Jones*, his *Chef-d'oeuvre*, (chief of works) has set the distinguished example of a story regularly built and consistent in all its parts, in which nothing occurs, and scarce a personage is introduced, that has not some share intending to advance the catastrophe'. Again Thackeray, pronounced the novel 'as a work of construction, quite a wonder'.

"Moral or immoral, let any man examine this romance as a work of art merely, and it must strike him as the most astonishing production of human ingenuity. There is not an incident ever so trifling but advances the story, grows out of former incidents, and is connected with the whole. Such a literary providence, if we may use such a word, is not to be seen in any other work of fiction......But the history of Tom Jones connects the very first page with the very last, and it is marvellous to think how the author could have built and carried all the structure in his brain, as he must have done before he began to put it to paper."

Dudden is of the view that these enlogies are not excessive. Fielding had a keen desire and strong passion for beauty of form and in his *Tom Jones* he showed himself at his best as a master of plot-architecture. We can appreciate the merits of his work, if we compare it with such books as Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle* or Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*.

In these writings the stories do not run consistently. Perhaps there would be no exaggeration in saying that they are collections of episodes. In each case it is hero who passes from different scenes and they all are connected together because they are experienced by the same person. Similarly the conclusions are not logically necessitated by the foregone incidents but they are arrived at simply because the tales must have their ends. *Tom Jones* on the other hand, is a classical example of a coherent story, having beginning, middle and an end. However, there are numberless incidents with varieties of characters, they are all preconceived to the subordination of the general scheme. The story develops slowly but surely through a succession of strictly relevant characters and events and at last terminating in a logically appropriate catastrophe. Certainly it was on account of his superb constructive art that Scott bestowed upon him the title of 'Father of the English Novel'. "We may observe this in the case of the incidents. These incidents often, at the points of the story where they occur, appear to be quite insignificant. We have not the slightest suspicion that they are designed to produce any particular effects. They seem to happen in the most casual way, following one another, or arising out of one anothor, just as incidents do in real life. Yet at the end of the book it is discovered that almost everyone of these seemingly trivial incidents—even such a detail as that of a guide mistaking the road to Bristol—has a necessary place in the train of events which brings about the denouement." In brief Fielding used the retrospective method in the development of his story.

As Fielding displayed his foresight and ingenuity in the management of the incidents so he exhibited his skill in the managements of characters. Smollett and Dickens introduce characters in the scheme of their stories for their own sake. Often they have no importance in the evolution of action but yet they are taken because they are interesting and entertaining. Fielding, on the other hand, introduced characters with an eye to the parts which they would be required to play in the working out of the plot. Although he created new and striking figures delightfully, yet his

attention never distracted from the central theme. "To this almost all the characters, as well as almost all the incidents, are made subservient. And the manner in which these characters are controlled for particular ends, without ever seeming to be so, is brilliant." The characters in *Tom Jones* are life-like and real. They are actuated by such actions which are quite appropriate and proper to them. They maintain their individualities without being moved and manipulated as puppets. Despite all this Fielding has contrived with a marvellous skill that each of these characters should play his or her natural and appropriate part in developing the plot of the novel.

In elaborating the plot Fielding did not only observe the rule of possibility but also that of probability. He did not strain the credulity of his reader. He discarded the supernatural or artificial means of achieving the desired results. In fact his aim was to solve the problems of his story in a natural, probable and plausible manner. When his hero is arrested and is in danger of being hanged Fielding declares :

"We will lend him none of that supernatural assistance with which we are entrusted, upon condition that we use it only on very important occasions. If he doth not, therefore, find some natural means of fairly extricating from all his distresses, we will do no violence to the truth and dignity of history for his sake. To natural means alone we are confined ; let us try, therefore, what by these means may be done for poor Jones."

So Fielding was anxious to safeguard the credibility of his narrative. Even sometime he made a practice of pausing in the midst of the recital so as to explain the circumstances which might strike strange to the reader. "He deemed it incumbent on him, for example, to offer an explanation of Partridge's curious conclusion that Tom was a Jacobite, and of his still more curious resolve, after his discovery of his error, to follow him to the war; or again, of Squire Western's unexpected, but opportune, appearance at Lady Bellaston's London house; or again, of the surprising alteration of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's attitude towards Tom Jones ; or again, of the

'revolution' in the mind of Mr. Allworthy with regard to that young hero. He considered that very special care ought to be taken to account fully for any radical change of sentiment or character; and censured the comic dramatists for their frequent negligence in this particular."

There are two other points which are worthy enough to be mentioned here. "The first is the masterly skill with which the secret of Tom's parentage is preserved until the moment ordained by the author for its revelation. All that is related in the early part of the novel concerning Partridge, and Jenny Jones, and the prudish Miss Bridget Allworthy, is admirably calculated to mystify the reader and throw him off the scent. Even in the final book, the letter of Mrs. Waters (*alias* Jenny Jones) is worded with such artful ambiguity that its purport can hardly fail to be misinterpreted. Yet, after the disclosure has been made, we find, looking back, that all the preceding details, so cunningly devised to perplex and mislead, are consistent with and even suggestive of the correct solution.

"The second point is the completeness of the winding-up of the story in the conclusion. All the problems here are solved. All the actions are consummated. All the chief characters, good and bad, receive appropriate rewards or punishments. Nothing is left unaccounted for or undetermined. There are no loose ends. The drama is played out and the curtain at last falls on a perfectly finished performance."

However, the plot of *Tom Jones* is well constructed yet it is not without flaw. In matter of form it is open to some objections. On general grounds the following criticism is offered. "Fielding, as has been said, aimed at keeping his narrative within the bounds, not merely of possibility, but also of probability. And it must be admitted that, of single incidents, there is perhaps only one which is definitely improbable—'the death bed scene', where Allworthy, suffering from a feverish cold, bids, in the grand philosophic style, a solemn farewell to his household. Yet in several places in the book the story, without actually exceeding the limit, comes perilously

near the extreme verge of what is probable. The coincidences are really too happy, the appearances of characters at the very times and the very places when and where they are required for the advancement of the action, are really too opportune to be altogether creditable. For example, when Tom, on the track of Sophia, first comes across the begger who has picked-up her pocket-book, then meets the Merry-Andrew who has seen her passing by, and finally, being driven by a storm to shelter in an alehouse, encounters the guide who has conducted her to Meriden, who feel that such a series of lucky occurrences, though certainly not impossible, is hardly likely to have come about in actual life.

"The next criticism is more serious. It cannot be denied that the ending of the story is unfortunately hurried and huddled. In striking contrast with the perfect clarity with which the various incidents are distinguished and timed throughout the greater part of the book, the momentous events of some of the final days are massed together so confusedly that it is impossible to understand exactly how and when they severally occurred. Fielding himself appears to have been conscious that the narrative in his concluding chapters is excessively compressed. He speaks of the 'variety of matter' which he is obliged to 'cram' into his Eighteenth Book; and adds, addressing the reader. 'When thou hast perused the many great events which this book will produce, thou wilt think the number of pages contained in it scarce sufficient to tell the story.'

"Again, the form of the work is somewhat marred, at any rate in the eyes of a modern critic, by the insertion of two long digressions—the story of the Man of the Hill and that of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, of these, the relation of Mrs. Fitzpatrick is the less objectionable, since it does reveal facts which have some bearing on the main story, and serves also to warm the runaway heroine of the dangers of misplaced attachment and cladestine marriage. For the prolix story of the Man of the Hill there is little excuse. Perhaps it was introduced with the object of giving Tom, an ignorant country boy, some idea of the snares that were laid for the unwary in London. But it is, at best, a superfluity."

Undoubtedly we can omit very few episodes without loss but there are at least two such episodes to which exception can fairly be taken. The incident of Tom's encounter with the gipsies is neither interesting nor of any service to the development of story. "Its only apparent use is to delay Tom's arrival at Coventry, and so enable Sophia to reach London before he could overtake her. The second incident which might advantageously have been dispensed with is that of Mrs. Arabella Hunt's proposal of marriage to Tom. The plump young widow of the rich old Turkey merchant is very abruptly introduced, offering the hero herself and her fortune, and receiving from him a courteous refusal. She has never once been mentioned hitherto, and she is only once referred to subsequently. No doubt the author's intention was to provide Sophia with a proof of the devotion of her lover, who, though at the time his whole fortune consisted of no more than five guineas, immediately refused an eligible marriage for her sake. Yet the manner in which the widow is suddenly projected into the story is, to say the least, clumsy. One is tempted to conjecture that the idea of this marriage proposal did not form part of Fielding's original design, but presented itself to his mind during the process of composition ; and that he incontinently adopted it, and embodied it in his narrative, notwithstanding its lack of connexion with the preceding history.

"Finally, the suggestion of incest is disagreeable. Fielding was rather too fond of touching on this theme. In his comedy *The Wedding Day* he brought two of the characters to the very verge of incest ; in *Joseph Andrews* he produced a situation where two lovers, contemplating marriage, are apparently proved to be brother and sister ; in *Tom Jones* he caused the hero to believe that the unknown lady with whom he had been but too intimate was his mother. Perhaps it was necessary that Tom should be reduced to the uttermost depth of horror and despair, that he might be brought to full and true repentance of his errors ; but some may wish that this result had been achieved by some less shocking means."

2. Characterization: *General Observations*: The plot of *Tom Jones* is no doubt superb, but characterization is also perfect and natural. Referring to characterization in

Tom Jones Dudden has observed in *Henry Fielding, His Life, Works, and Times*:

"The plot of *Tom Jones*, in its unity and completeness, is nearly as perfect as a plot can be; but the plot, after all, is only the skeleton of a novel. The plot must be filled out and wrought out by characters; and the glory of this book pre-eminently consists in the superb realistic portraiture of the persons that carry on the action.

"What immediately strikes us in these figures is (in the phrase of Lytton) their 'flesh-and-blood vitality'. Whether humorous or serious, whether elaborately described or lightly sketched with a few impressionist strokes, almost all of them are unmistakably and incontestably alive. They stamp themselves on the mind as real persons. We believe in them and are interested in them, just as we believe and are interested in living people with whom we are familiar.

"How Fielding contrived to infuse such marvellous animation into his characters is explained by himself. The secret lay in his close and constant study of real men and women in the various relations of real life. He would not, like the romance-writers, rely simply on his imagination for the creation of his characters; that method, as the romances showed resulted in the production, not of true human beings, but only of 'monsters'. Nor would he be content merely to imitate the figures depicted in the works of earlier authors; for a character that is modelled only on a character in literature is, after all, no more than 'the faint copy of a copy', and must needs lack the force and spirit of a character drawn directly from life. 'Imitation here,' he wrote, 'will not do the business. The picture must be after Nature herself.'

"On 'Nature herself'—on the exact observation and study of actual humanity—Fielding confessedly based his work. Thus, he professed, as a 'historian' worthy of credit, to 'draw his materials from Nature only.' He ventured to hope that in his history 'nothing will be found which hath never yet been seen in Human Nature.' 'We have good authority, he declared, 'for all our characters are no less indeed than the vast authentic doomsday-book of Nature.' To this supreme authority he repeatedly referred in justification

of descriptions ni his novel. If one of his characters seemed almost unbelievably attractive and amiable, he insisted that the picture was 'really a copy from Nature,' if another appeared to act with extraordinary illogicality, he desired his readers 'to look carefully into Human Nature,' where they would find an explanation of the phenomenon ; if others behaved oddly, it was because men and women in real life are odd, as anyone might discover who would take the trouble to 'consult that original book of Nature, whence every passage in our work is transcribed, though we quote not always the particular page for its authority.'

"Human Nature, then, is what Fielding claimed to reproduce in the characters of his novel. It was, moreover, his endeavour to picture this Human Nature faithfully and accurately as he saw it. He would not embelish or idealize. He would not extenuate or conceal. He would express what he found in life, and the whole of what he found—the good and also the evil, the beautiful and also the ugly—without additions and without suppressions. He aimed, in short, at recording facts—the stark facts of Human Nature fully, fairly, candidly, and regardless of whether those facts squared or clashed with conventional ideas. This he considered to be the function of a trustworthy 'historian,' and he frequently called attention to it in his book. 'It is our business,' he wrote, 'to relate facts as they are.' 'It is my business to relate matters of fact with veracity.' 'Our business is only to record truth.' 'We determined, when we first sat down to write this history...to guide our pen throughout by the directions of truth.' It is our province to relate facts, and we shall leave causes to persons of much higher genius'. The facts might be surprising, and might even seem to some unnatural ; but, if they were indeed facts, 'that historic truth to which we profess so inviolable an attachment' compelled Fielding to communicate them. Of some such facts he wrote : 'So matters fell out, and so I must relate them ; and if any reader is shocked at their appearing unnatural, I cannot help it. I must remind such persons that I am not writing a system, but a history and I am not obliged to reconcile every matter to the received notions concerning Truth and Nature.'

"Here, then, we discover the two-fold reason of the astonishing life-likeness of Fielding's characters. First, he drew them, not from his imagination, not yet from models in literature, but from the living Human Nature which he observed in the people round him. And secondly, he reproduced the Human Nature that he observed with plain frankness and candour—without glosses, without reticences. The representation might not please the fastidious, but it was absolutely true. And the result of this two-fold method was an assemblage of natural characters hardly surpassed in any work of fiction. 'As a painter of real life,' wrote Hazlitt, 'he (*i.e.* Fielding) was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of Human Nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare...He has brought together a greater variety of characters in common life, marked with more distinct peculiarities, and without an atom of caricature, than any other novel writer whatever.' Gibbon declared that *Tom Jones* might 'be considered as the history of Human Nature'; and Byron, in a famous phrase, proclaimed the author of this great book 'the prose Homer of Human Nature.'

"The profound knowledge of Human Nature which Fielding displayed in his characterization was mainly acquired by what he himself called 'conversation'—that is, by constant intercourse and association with all sorts and conditions of human beings. The author of *Nollekens and His Times* informs us, on the authority of his great-aunt Mrs. Hussey, who was intimately acquainted with the novelist, that 'Henry Fielding was fond of colouring his pictures of life with the glowing and variegated tints of Nature, by conversing with persons of every situation and calling'—even with those of such low degree as 'Sir Roger de Coverley's old friends, the Vauxhall watermen.' And James Harris of Salisbury, describing Fielding's qualifications as a writer, says that, had his life not been 'spent in a promiscuous intercourse with persons of all ranks, his pictures of human kind had neither been so various nor so natural.' Fielding himself insisted on the crucial importance of 'conversation'—of mixing with people, of personal experience of people—for the attainment of that thorough understanding of Human Nature which mere book-learning can never impart. 'A true knowledge of the world,'

he said, 'is gained only by conversation, and the manners of every rank must be seen in order to be known.' Again, in his eloquent 'Invocation', he cried :

> Come Experience, long conversant with the wise, the good, the learned, and the polite. Nor with them only, but with every kind of character, from the minister at his levee, to the bailiff in his sponging-house ; from the duchess at her drum, to the landlady behind her bar. From thee only can the manners of mankind be known ; to which the recluse pendant, however great his parts or extensive his learning may be, hath ever been a stranger.

"Of course, in the delineation of his characters Fielding did not simply produce a series of literally exact portraits of the people whom he had observed and known. He was not a mere copyist, but a great original artist. The only figure in *Tom Jones* which approximates to a literal portrait is the beautiful one of Sophia—the true likeness of her whose image could never depart from the author's breast. Most of the rest are compounded of both observation and imagination, of both experience and invention. Sometimes Fielding took known persons as the bases of his characters ; but he treated his models imaginatively, selecting, re-combining, exaggerating, toning down, and otherwise modifying their qualities and idiosyncrasies, and changing their conditions and circumstances at his pleasure. At other times, like Lesage and Moliere, or like Addison and Steele in their character-sketches, he appears to have started with types, with fabricated figures illustrating various temperaments, humours, or passions; but he then took care to individualize his types, filling in the fictitious outlines with details copied from real men and women attentively observed. Thus we find everywhere a fusion of fact and fancy, of imitation and invention. Always, however, these partly copied, partly imagined characters are made to speak and act in strictest conformity with the laws of Human Nature and the authentic facts of Human Life. This is the essence of Fielding's 'realism'!

Tom Jones: "We may now proceed to a review of the chief characters of the novel ; and it is proper that we should begin with the hero and heroine.

"In externals, at any rate, Tom Jones, the hero, was created after the likeness of Fielding himself, as he was in his

youth. He was not, indeed, so tall as Fielding, being less than 6 feet in stature ; but, like Fielding, he was 'one of the handsomest young fellows in the world,' endowed with 'a very fine person and a most comely set of features.' His countenance, indeed, was almost effeminate in its beauty ; but any appearance of softness was corrected by a most masculine frame and carriage, 'which latter had as much in them of the Hercules as the former had of the Adonis.' He was in truth a robust young man—a tireless walker, a fearless rider, and a boxer in strength and agility almost a match for a professional. He had moreover an air of dignity and natural good breeding ; even when dressed in a suit of fustian, with a cheap, brass-handled sword at his side, he looked a gentleman.

"His character is interesting. Nature had endowed him with many estimable qualities. He was constituitonally frank and open (detesting 'every species of falsehood and dishonesty'), generous even to excess, chivalrous, disinterested, and, though quick tempered, devoid of malice. He had a conscience ; 'for though he did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it.' He had a strong sense of honour, though he was apt to be greatly mistaken in his view of what honour required. He was even, in a rather vague way, religious. His outstanding quality, however, on the credit side of his character, was the virtue which Fielding most admired—'good nature,' 'goodness of heart.' He was indeed the very incarnation of good-natured manhood. 'I do not pretend to say,' cried Mrs. Miller, 'the young man is without faults ; but they are...vastly overbalanced by one of the most humane, tender, honest hearts that ever man was blest with.' 'I know,' said Allworthy, 'he hath been guilty of faults ; but there is great goodness of heart at the bottom.'

"Now, in the case of Tom Jones, this good nature, or goodheartedness, meant precisely two things—first, a readiness to do a kindness whenever opportunity offered, and secondly, a determination to inflict no injury on anyone, if he could help it. On the one hand, he sincerely delighted in rendering services to his fellow-creatures. He was, indeed, 'one of the

best-natured fellows alive, and had all that weakness which is called compassion, and which distinguishes this imperfect character from that noble firmness of mind, which rolls a man, as it were within himself, and, like a polished bowl, enables him to run through the world without being once stopped by the calamities which happen to other.'

'He was never an indifferent spectator of the misery or happiness of anyone.' On the other hand, he would not willingly inflict even the most trifling hurt on anybody. He could truthfully declare that he had 'never done, nor even designed, an injury to any being whatever.' 'I have been guilty with women, I own it,' he cried ; but am not conscious that I have ever injured any. Nor would I, to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being.'

"But, while full allowance must be made for Tom's 'goodheartedness', he was very far indeed from being a model character. He 'had naturally violent animal spirits', which carried him away into all manner of extravagances. As a lad, he was 'an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal', disrespectful to his tutors, and prone to mischievous frolics. Nor, as he grew up, did he acquire sobriety. With all his 'goodness of heart and openness of temper', he was incorrigibly wayward and imprudent; so that he was generally accounted (not without reason) 'one of the wildest fellows in England'. His trouble, in fact, was that—apart from those two 'good-natured' rules of doing kindnesses whenever possible, and of injuring nobody—he had no fixed principles. He lived by impulse, not by reason. Dominated by the emotion that chanced to be uppermost at the moment, he was apparently incapable of controlling his passions. When delighted, or grieved, or angry, or anxious, he was apt to fall into paroxysms of frenzied excitement and to behave literally like a madman. And, as might have been expected of one so volatile and unbalanced, his conduct was singularly confused and illogical—a strange compound of good and evil. For instance, he 'scorned a lie,' yet lied with obstinacy ; but lied only in order to screen a humble friend. Again, when in need of money, he thought that it would be 'dishonest' to use

Sophia's bank-note (though Sophia would gladly have given it him), yet did not scruple to accept disgraceful wages from Lady Bellaston ; which wages, again, on a sudden impulse of generosity, he immediately offered to bestow on a distressed person. Such actions are indications of a disordered mind. Indeed, perhaps the most that can be said for poor Tom is that, though heedless and reckless, he was not radically vicious ; and that 'in balancing his faults with his perfection,' the latter seem 'rather to preponderate.'

"Moralists have dealt harshly with this young man ; yet some pleas may reasonably be urged in his defence. The circumstances of his early life were hardly propitious for the development of character. He passed his boyhood among people who, with very few exceptions, disliked him, magnified his failings, and predicted that 'he was certainly born to be hanged.' Nobody really sympathized with him ; nobody troubled to understand him, or to give him the judicious guidance which a mettlesome lad requires. Allworthy, indeed, was kind but stiff and inaccessible ; Thwackum used him barbarously; Square was 'active in injustice towards him' ; Mrs. Blifil at first seemed to hate him, though later she took him into favour ; young Blifil never let pass an opportunity of doing him an ill turn. The solitary boy was thus driven to consort with the unedifying friends who alone seemed to appreciate him—the thieving game-keeper, Black George, and the boisterous, hard-drinking sportsman, Squire Western. It is to his credit that, with such an upbringing, his morals and manners were not worse than in fact they were.

"After all, the only grave charge that can be brought against Tom Jones is his incontinence with women—particularly his liaison with Lady Bellaston. The two earlier affairs were comparatively venial. The Molly Seagrim episode was brought about by that artful young person herself, who having had amorous experience already, knew exactly how to behave so as to overcome 'the virtuous resolutions' of her lover. The affair with Mrs. Waters, too, can be judged indulgently, when it is remembered that Tom was attacked by a clever woman many years older than himself, who deliberately brought to bear 'the whole artillery of love'—'every

engine of amorous warfare,' in which she was expert—to subdue his virtue.

"The Bellaston intrigue was a far more serious matter, and it is this that is chiefly cited as evidence of Tom's depravity. One recollects the fierce denunciation of that great gentleman, Colonel Newcome :

> Heavens, my blood boils when I think of him ! I wouldn't sit down in the same room with such a fellow, sir. If he came in at that door, I would say, 'How dare you, you hireling ruffian, to sully with your presence an apartment where my young friend and I are conversing together ? Where two gentlemen, I say, are taking their wine after dinner ? How dare you, you degraded villain !'

The same disgust has been expressed by many. Richardson branded Tom Jones as 'a kept fellow, the lowest of all fellows'; Lady Mary thought him 'a scoundrel' ; Byron, a pretty bad sinner himself, classed him among 'accomplished balckguards.' Yet without any question of white-washing, there are, in this case, certain mitigating circumstances which ought to be taken into account.

"It must be remembered that Tom was a simple country boy who had never been to London, and who was in consequence 'thoroughly ignorant of the town,' and in particular of the ways of that discreetly profligate society woman, 'whom everybody knows to be what nobody calls her.' Lady Bellaston's advances on the night of the masquerade took him completely by surprise. He 'had never less inclination to an amour' than on that evening; but he feared to offend a person who had it in her power to put him in touch with his adored Sophia; also, 'gallantry to the ladies was among his principles of honour,' and—however foolishly and wrongly—'he held it as much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love, as if it had been a challenge to fight.' He, therefore, complied with the undesired invitation. Unfortunately, at the moment, he was in desperate straits for money ; indeed, he had literally not a shilling in the world. Hence the temptation to accept her ladyship's gift of £50 was almost irresistible. But, having thus put himself in her debt, he felt that he would be guilty of the grossest ingratitude if he did not make the return expected of him. 'He knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred ; and as his necessity obliged him to

accept them, so his honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the price.' As soon, however, as he learned from Nightingale what the woman's true character was, and realized that he need not feel particularly obliged for presents which were in fact only 'wages' paid for services rendered he immediately terminated a connexion which had never from the first given him any satisfaction. It may be added that in 1745 the particular misdemeanour of which he was guilty was not uncommon, nor was it generally regarded as exceptionally odious and shocking. And it is but fair that Tom's conduct should be judged by the easier standards of his century rather than by the stricter mode of later times.

"On this episode Scott makes a singularly inept comment, He writes :

> The character of Jones, otherwise a model of generosity, openness, manly spirit mingled with thoughtless dissipation, is......unnecessarily degraded by the nature of his intercourse with Lady Bellaston ; and this is one of the circumstances which incline us to believe that Fielding's ideas of what was gentleman-like and honourable had sustained some depreciation.

But, in the first place, there is no ground for stating that Tom's degradation was unnecessary. The novelist's problem was to inspire a wild young man, only too prone to yield to temptation, particularly when it came to him in a woman's shape, with so profound a distaste for illicit amours, that the reality and permanence of his reformation could be depended on. It may well be that nothing less than a very shameful and painful experience, such as that to which Tom was subjected as the paid lover of Lady Bellaston, could have had power to effect the salutary conversion desired. In the second place, there is no ground whatever for the suggestion that Fielding himself failed to appreciate the wrongness of his hero's conduct. He did indeed put forward such excuses as could fairly be offered by Tom's divagations from the moral path. But he did not condone those divagations, or minimize their heinousness, or let them pass without adequate punishment. On the contrary, we find that for every delinquency of which Tom was guilty he was in some way made to suffer. 'Why do I blame fortune?' cried the young man himself. 'I am myself the cause of all my misery. All the dreadful mischiefs

which have befallen me are the consequences only of my own folly and vice.' So far from palliating misconduct, the author of *Tom Jones* laid himself out to enforce the moral that every transgression, no matter how strong the temptation to it may have been, is infallibly and terribly visited on the transgressor.

"Some critics have expressed surprise that Fielding, in the conclusion of his novel, did not remove the stain of illegitimacy from his hero. If he had done so—if he had made Tom the offspring of a secret marriage, rather than of a secret intrigue—he would have conformed to the practice of the romance writers, who often began by making a mystery of the origin of the principal personage, but almost invariably ended by revealing him to have been born of distinguished, or at any rate of honest, parents. Fielding, however, was not a romance-writer, but a historian of human nature. He was aware that the happy 'discoveries' so common in romances were rare in real life. He knew also that in remote country houses, as well as in town mansions, there were not a few women of the type of Bridget Allworthy—outwardly prudish, inwardly sensual; hiding secret immoralities under a cloak of pretentious respectability. As a realist, therefore, he deliberately adopted the more probable, though in some respects less satisfactory, solution of the birth-mystery.

Sophia: "We may pass now from the hero to the heroine of the book. Sophia Western—'the Somersetshire angel'—in face and form, in qualities and character, was admittedly modelled on Charlotte Cradock; and her behaviour was (in Fielding's opinion) just what Charlotte's would have been had the latter been placed in similar circumstances. For a general description of her, therefore, it is sufficient to refer to the account of Charlotte given above. But the attitude which she took up towards her father and her lover respectively—an attitude more characteristic of a modern girl than of an eighteenth-century young lady—seems to require some additional comment.

"Sophia was her father's 'little darling,' and 'she returned all his affection in the most ample manner.' She ministered unselfishly to all his whims and wants—playing again and again his favourite jigs upon her harpsichord, though she

herself cared only for the music of Handel; hunting with him, when he wished it, though she had no relish for the sport; and good-humouredly putting up with his drunkenness and coarseness. To her, in almost everything, 'her father's word was a law.' On one point, however, she stood out against him inflexibly—nothing could induce her to wed a man whom she loathed. While she was willing to promise not to marry anyone during her father's lifetime without his full consent she refused to admit that 'the authority of any parent' could oblige a girl to marry 'in direct opposition' to her inclinations. To this principle of the right of children to resist, in a matter where their whole life-happiness was concerned, the tyrannical compulsion of a parent—a tyranny very generally, and indeed, according to Fielding, almost universally, exercised at this time—she steadfastly adhered; and at any cost she was resolved to vindicate it. She was even prepared to leave her home in the dead of night, to face the perils of the country roads, to endure extreme fatigues, and to hide herself in London, a city entirely unknown to her, sooner than consent to a union from which her sound instincts revolted. When we reflect on the feebleness and flabbiness of the average young woman of the period, we cannot but admire the forceful character of this girl, who, without any hysterical fuss, but with undaunted spirit and determination, insisted on her right to choose her own mate, make her own life, and realize her own happiness.

"In her relations with her lover Sophia was no less admirable. She first fell in love with Tom without realizing that she had done so. It was the story of her connexion with Molly Seagrim made her aware of the state of her feelings. She was ashamed of the affection which she had unconsciously cherished for the young man, and 'summoned every argument her reason...could suggest, to subdue and expel it.' Then Tom broke his arm in rescuing her from an unruly horse, and his 'great bravery' on this occasion revived her passion. When she presently discovered that he, on his side, was desperately in love with her, she did not disguise the tenderness she felt for him. Thereafter she showed herself both courageous and magnanimous. It took some courage to contemplate union with a man whom almost everyone spoke ill of. And it

needed not little magnanimity to forgive his numerous shortcomings. The clear-sighted girl was not ignorant of those faults ; but she recognized also the amiable qualities of her lover, and did not expect perfection. She was, indeed, very forbearing. She was willing to overlook the old scandal about Molly. She was ready to excuse even the shocking affair at Upton, as a dereliction due in part to Tom's despair of winning herself. What she could not pardon, however, was his proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston, 'at the very time' (as she wrote) 'when you would have me imagine you was under such concern on my account.' Such levity seemed to her so utterly inconsistent with genuine affection that she resolved to discard the young man for good and all ; nor could the persuasion of Mr. Allworthy, or the objurgation of Squire Western, or the explanation of Mrs. Miller induce her to restore to her favour one whom she had come to regard as no better than 'a good-natured libertine.' Only at the last, when she was thoroughly convinced of the sincerity of Tom's repentance, and felt quite sure that she could rely on his fidelity in the future, did she consent in the most delightful manner imaginable, to give him her hand. Sophia's ideas of the obligation of purity on men, as well as on women, were certainly in advance of her age. 'The delicacy of your sex,' said Tom, 'cannot conceive the grossness of ours, nor how little one sort of amour has to do with the heart. 'I will never marry a man,' replied Sophia, very gravely, 'who shall not learn refinement enough to be as incapable as I am myself of making such a distinction.'

"Sophia's charm is irresistible. Happily Fielding did not fall into the mistake of making her, in Square's phrase, 'perfectly perfect.' She was not exempt from trifling failings. Though she hated deceit, she permitted herself 'a little fibbing' and 'a little well-directed flattery' now and then, to extricate herself from difficult situations ; though ordinarily very sweet-tempered, she could flame into an angry passion on occasion; she had also a spice of vanity, which caused her, though only for a moment, to toy with the idea of playing the part of a tragedy heroine, sacrificing herself to her father's wishes, and figuring pathetically as a martyr to filial duty. But these tiny flaws—if flaws they can be called—only display her as natural

and human. They in no way lessen our appreciation of her noble qualities of head and heart—her good sense and good feeling, her calm courage in face of life's difficulties and perplexities, her gaiety and candour. Sophia was Fielding's ideal of what a thoroughly wholesome and amiable English girl should be ; he confessed himself 'greatly in love' with her, and was convinced that his readers would love her also.

"Two curiously opposite objections have been brought against Sophia. Richardson absurdly described her as 'so fond, so foolish, and so insipid'—preposterously ill-judged phrases, which Thackeray (who should have known better) echoed in his 'fond foolish, palpitating little creature.' Byron, on the other hand, seems to have thought her too 'emphatic.' Yet she remains, unscathed by criticism, one of the most attractive and satisfying heroines in English iiterature.

Squire Western: "Of all the characters in *Tom Jones* the most original is Squire Western, father of the exquisite Sophia. It is possible that in creating this supremely humorous figure Fielding had a definite contemporary personage in mind. If so, his model was probably Carew Hervey Mildmay—Horace Walpole's 'old Mildmay, whose lungs, and memory, and tongue will never wear out'—who died in the eighties at the age of ninety-four. This bluff old Tory sportsman was a friend of Bolingbroke and Pope, and at one time represented Harwich in the House of Commons. He owned an estate at Queen Camel, some thirteen miles from East Stour, and another at Low Ham, about eight miles from Glastonbury. Fielding may well have been acquainted with him, and have taken amused note of his eccentric traits. It is likely, however, that, for his delination of Mr. Western, he did not confine himself to a single model, but gathered hints from the personalities of several other rural gentlemen whom he had met on his hunting excursions in Somerset and Dorset. For some while he had been studying the character of the typical 'Booby Squire,' and had already produced preliminary sketches of the species in Squire Badger and Sir Gregory Kennel. Mr. Western is the final and perfect embodiment of the distinguishing peculiarities—or of what Fielding conceived to be the distinguishing peculiarities—of this rugged race of men.

"Squire Western, with his broad Somersetshire dialect, his volleys of oaths and curses, his gross talk even in the presence of ladies, his extravagant 'caperings' and 'hallowings', and his uncouth manners which, in his sister's opinion, deserved a cane, is indeed an astonishing figure. He was a sportsman of the old school. All his thoughts and interests were centred 'either in the field, the stable, or the dog-kennel.' Every morning he was engaged with hunting or some violent outdoor exercise ; after his two o'clock dinner he passed the time in deep potations with some boon companion ; and when he went to bed, he 'was generally so drunk that he could not see.' Apart from sport (in which 'no man was more expert'), and the business of conserving and augmenting his fortune (in which he was perfectly versed), he was singularly destitute of knowledge and understanding. He professed himself an ardent Jacobite ; but his political utterances were merely parrot-repetitions of the slogans of *The London Evening Post*. He was a justice of the peace ; but he knew little or nothing of the law which he was supposed to administer, and, on account of his reckless exercise of his magisterial authority, had, 'had two informations exhibited against him in the King's Bench.' On almost every subject that could interest an intelligent being he displayed 'more than Gothic ignorance.'

"He was the most excitable, the most emotional, the most unreasonable of men. Everything that he said or did was violent and extravagant ; 'for he had not the least command over any of his passions, and that which had at any time the ascendant in his mind hurried him to the wildest excesses.' Thus, when a partridge was shot by trespassers on his estate, he stormed and raged 'in as high terms and as bitter language as if his house had been broken open, and the most valuable furniture stolen out of it.' When a maid-servant was insolent, he 'swore twenty oaths he would send her to bridewell,' and was only deterred from this illegal proceeding by the expostulation of his clerk. His irrationality is best exemplified by his treatment of his daughter. He was really devoted to this girl ; yet, because she refused to acquiesce in his plans for her welfare, he did not hesitate to use her cruelly. The very fact of her daring to fall in love,

without his permission, enraged him. 'How ! in love !' he cried in a passion, 'in love, without acquainting me ! I'll disinherit her ; I'll turn her out of doors, stark naked, without a farthing. Is all my kindness vor'ur, and vondness o'ur come to this, to fall in love without asking me leave ?' When he learnt that the object of her affection was Tom Jones, he boiled over with fury. 'I will turn her out of doors ; she shall beg, and starve, and rot in the streets. Not one hapeny, not a hapeny shall she ever hae o' mine.' He was resolved that she should marry Blifil, whether she would or no. The match, which involved the ultimate joining of two rich estates, was a sound business proposition, and his whole heart was set upon it. 'I tell thee, it will preserve me,' he vociferated to Sophia ; 'it will give me health, happiness, life, everything. Upon my soul I shall die if dost refuse me ; I shall break my heart, I shall, upon my soul.' Then, when she still resisted, he clenched his fist, and bit his lips, and bellowed his determination that the marriage should take place, though she should hang herself the next morning.

"The man was a barbarian. His landlady considered him 'a very hastish kind of gentleman' ; his sister pronounced him 'absolutely a perfect Croat' ; Lady Bellaston honoured him with the appellation of 'Hottentot'. Yet, with all his boorishness and brutality, he was not altogether disreputable. He was capable of a rough sort of kindness ; and his love for his girl—which, though oddly exhibited, was absolutely genuine—did to some extent humanize and civilize him. Very pleasant, at any rate, is the final picture of this tough sportsman, playing in the nursery with his little grand-daughter a year and a half old and vowing that her baby prattle was 'sweeter music than the finest cry of dogs in England.'

"In the story of Squire Western there is one incident—his inglorious encounter with Captain Egglane—which has been censured by Scott. 'As an English squire,' wrote that critic, 'Western ought not to have taken a beating so unresistingly... We half suspect that the passage is an interpolation. It is inconsistent with the squire's readiness to engage in rustic affrays.' But the account is certainly not interpolated ; nor

is Western's behaviour, as here described, really inconsistent with his character. It is true that he was apt to bluster about lending 'a flick' or 'a douse' to anyone who annoyed him; that he threatened to 'lick' Tom Jones, to 'whip in' Parson Supple, and even to 'lick the jacket' of Lord Fellamar, if he would lay by the 'spit' that was dangling at his side; also, that he did once fight Parson Thwackum, and beat him, though the clergyman had been a champion boxer in his youth. But though Western talked big, and was ready enough, when roused, to use his fists, there is no evidence that he was a particularly brave man. Moreover, on this occasion he was completely disconcerted by the strangeness of his surroundings and the unexpectedness of the event. He was in London, where he had been only twice in his life before, and the manners and customs whereof were absolutely unknown to him. It does not seem to have entered his mind that he could not affront a peer of the realm, and give the lie to an officer of the army, with the same impunity with which he was wont to browbeat country boys and parsons. Suddenly he was confronted by a professional soldier—probably one of those military bullies that were often retained in the service of persons of station—who addressed him in language of ceremony which he could not comprehend, and then without warning assaulted him with a cane, while he himself had no weapon at hand. It is not unnatural that, in these circumstances, he should have fallen momentarily into a panic. Even so, however, he did not show himself quite a coward: for, notwithstanding his agitation, he managed to splutter out a challenge to a fight with bare fists, or with single stick in the yard. In the ludicrous scene there is nothing incredible."

3. The Ethical Element in ***Tom Jones*****:** Referring to the ethical and moral elements in *Tom Jones*, Dudden has observed: "It is a curious fact that, from the time of its publication down to a comparatively recent date, *Tom Jones* has been criticized chiefly on the ground of its alleged immoral tendency. Richardson, for instance, maliciously denounced it as 'a dissolute book . . . a profligate performance.' Johnson angrily rebuked Hannah More for alluding to a passage in the novel. 'I am shocked,' said he 'to hear

you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it; a confession which no modest lady should ever make. I scarcely knew a more corrupt work.' Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's biographer and editor, savagely attacked the book, as 'seemingly intended to sap the foundation of that morality which it is the duty of parents and public instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people.' He affirmed that the author, by his vulgarization of the ethics of Shaftesbury, and especially his invention of the cant phrase 'goodness of heart,' had 'done more towards corrupting the rising generation than any writer we know of.' Even Carlyle, though he allowed that Fielding's novels were 'genuine things,' hesitated to recommend them, because 'their morality is so loose.'

"It is true that some weighty judgments can be cited on the opposite side. There was Sir Walter Scott, for instance. Scott, indeed, was 'no great believer in the moral utility to be derived from fictitious compositions'. He held that novels were read for amusement rather than for instruction, and that the common talk about their influence for good or ill was, in the main, disingenuous and nonsensical. At any rate he was convinced that Fielding's great novel—notwithstanding certain 'jocularly coarse' passages contained in it—would do no one any harm.

> The vices and follies of Tom Jones (he wrote) are those which the world soon teaches to all who enter on the career of life, and to which society is unhappily but too indulgent; nor do we believe that, in any one instance, the perusal of Fielding's novel has added one libertine to the large list, who would not have been such had it never crossed the press. And it is with concern we add our sincere belief that the fine picture of frankness and generosity exhibited in that fictitious character has had as few imitators as the career of his follies.

Another defender of the novel was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who insisted strongly on the essential healthiness of Fielding's work, in contrast with the essential unhealthiness, of Richardson's.

> I do loathe (he said) the cant which can recommend *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe* as strictly moral, though they poison the imagination of the young with continued dose of *tinct lyttae*, while *Tom Jones* is prohibited as loose. I do not speak of young women;—but a young man whose heart or feelings can be injured, or even his passions excited, by aught in this novel, is already thoroughly corrupt.

Lytton, again, in a paper 'Of English Notions of Morality', proclaimed Fielding a 'deep, accurate, and scientific moralist', and deplored the general lack of perception of the ethical motive, which inspired him in the composition of his greatest novel. 'Nothing', he declared, 'can more clearly prove our ignorance of real morals, than the fact that no one appreciated this high moral purpose in our author.' But, notwithstanding the few dissentient voices, the immorality of *Tom Jones* was, until almost our own time, one of the generally accepted commonplaces of literarry criticism.

'To anyone who has read the book with care this allegation must be surprising. It is true that Fielding was a realist, who painted life as it is, in its darker as well as in its brighter aspects. But there can be no question that he was also a moralist. He confessedly wrote, not merely to picture, but also to edify ; not merely to describe the life of his time, but also to criticize it with a view to its correction. In the Dedication of *Tom Jones* he affirmed that his intention in that composition was three-fold : first, to exhibit the loveliness of virtue and the hatefulness of vice ; secondly, to convince men that their true interest lies in the pursuit of virtue and the avoidance of vice ; and thirdly, to inculcate the lesson that virtue needs to be guarded by discretion. He insisted that the reader would discover in his pages 'nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue.' 'On the contrary,' he said, 'I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history.' Nothing could be clearer than this. Fielding undoubtedly intended his story to be the vehicle or medium of wholesome moral instruction. He did not, however, think it necessary to impart that instruction with Richardsonian solemnity. 'Surely', he cried, 'a man may speak truth with a smiling countenance.' He preferred to put forth his serious teachings lightly, using all his resources of wit and humour 'to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices.' Unfortunately his lightness of touch was too often mistaken for flippancy, and the earnest moral purpose underlying his work was consequently seldom appreciated.

"As has already been pointed out, Fielding was not

strictly a moral philosopher. His aim was, not to elaborate a system for the learned, not with abstract speculation, but with practical instruction. Like Addison and Steele and Pope, he was not an original thinker, but a popularizer—a competent amateur in moral philosophy, presenting the conclusions of the experts in simple untechnical forms, adapted to the understanding of inexpert readers.

"His ethical doctrine was mainly derived from the Bible, the writings of Cicero, and Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (included in his *Characteristics*, 1711). For the last author—described as 'the great Lord Shaftesbury' and 'the elegant Lord Shaftesbury'—he had a special regard. He did not, indeed, quote him literally and textually; but he appropriated much of the substance of his philosophy, which he reproduced with some modification in unphilosophical terms. Sir John Hawkins was not far out when he described Fielding's morality as 'that of Lord Shaftesbury vulgarised.'

"The chief ethical ideas which Fielding endeavoured to impress upon the readers of *Tom Jones* are the following: the beauty of virtue; the profitableness of virtue; the supreme value of 'goodness of heart'; the necessity of prudence in the conduct of life; and the existence of good as well as of evil elements in human nature, which in consequence ought not to be judged too harshly.

"(*a*) It seemed to him that the beauty of virtue could best be demonstrated by means of examples; 'for an example,' he said, 'is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes, as it were an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness which Plato asserts that there is in her naked charms.' He wisely refrained, however, from making his examples too perfect; rightly considering that a deeper moral impression is likely to be produced by instances of natural, albeit imperfect, human goodness than by figures of abnormal excellence. At the same time he never failed to present whatever of goodness there might be in a character in the most amiable and attractive light. The 'beauty of virtue' is so displayed in a Sophia or an Allworthy as to engage the admiration and affection of every unprejudiced mind. Fielding might indeed make fun of the trifling frailties which are

sometimes associated with virtue ; but never did he, even in the slightest degree, depreciate the loveliness of virtue itself.

"On the other hand, no moralist has more scathingly exhibited the essential ugliness and repulsiveness of vice. In *Tom Jones* vice is stripped of all romantic glamour. Our eyes are never dazzled by the glitter of brilliant blackguardism. We are never allowed to imagine that lubricity can, in any circumstances, be an agreeable or charming quality. The vicious persons in the novel—Lady Bellaston and the Blifils—are painted pitilessly in hideous colours. Even in the case of the comparatively good characters misbehaviour is not glossed over. The lapses of *Tom Jones*, for instance, though some excuses might be pleaded for them, are invariably represented as nasty and offensive.

"(*b*) In maintaining the profitableness of virtue, Fielding was careful to dissociate himself from the teaching of prudential moralists, that virtue is 'the certain road' to worldly prosperity. That 'comfortable doctrine' he repudiated as one 'which we don't apprehend to be Christian, which we are convinced is not true, and which is indeed destructive of one of the noblest arguments that reason alone can furnish for the belief of immortality.' He was aware that the good man, by reason of his goodness, is often afflicted with great sufferings. Yet he contended that the good man, even in the midst of misfortunes, enjoys a 'solid inward comfort of mind,' which more than compensates him for the loss of all the emoluments and gratifications obtainable by vice. This 'inward comfort' constitutes, indeed, the highest happiness within human reach. The choicest luxuries can afford no pleasure comparable with 'the warm, solid content, the swelling satisfaction, the thrilling transports and the exulting triumphs, which a good mind enjoys in the contemplation of a generous, virtuous, noble, benevolent action.' The prize of millions cannot inspire the rapture which arises from the consciousness of such a virtuous action. No delight which the ambitious, the avaricious, or the voluptuous may experience can equal the delight of knowing that one has served and benefited others. Fielding's argument, in brief, is this : The highest happiness consists in 'inward comfort of mind :' this 'inward comfort' is obtainable only by virtue; hence virtue is necessary for procuring the

highest happiness. Virtue, accordingly, as the means to such happiness, is profitable. 'Believe me,' Fielding makes Allworthy say, 'there is more pleasure, even in this world, in an innocent and virtuous life, than in one debauched and vicious.'

"Vice, on the other hand, whatever material advantages it may procure, does not bring happiness, and cannot therefore be profitable. In the first place, the vicious man is afflicted with 'horror and anxiety,' or at least with inward disquiet for there are scarcely any natures so entirely diabolical as to be capable of grave wrong-doings without experiencing some pangs of conscience. In the second place, vice in the long run entails all manner of painful consequences. 'Good heavens !' exclaimed Allworthy, 'in what miserable distresses do vice and imprudence involve men ! How much beyond our designs are the effects of wickedness sometimes carried !' Fielding was as strongly convinced as George Eliot of the stern truth that the wrong-doer cannot do wrong and get away with it. It is 'the nature of vice,' he maintained, to bring upon those who practise it 'sufficient punishment.' The punishment may be delayed, for the Devil 'generally stands by those who are thoroughly his servants, and helps them off in all extremities, till their bargain expires.' But sooner or later men find, as Tom Jones found to his cost, that 'follies and vices' are infallibly productive of calamitous results. Things, in fact, are so ordered that vice at long last cannot be profitable.

"It may be noted that in this teaching virtue is represented as enlightened self-interest. The good man, by the practice of virtue, takes the surest way of securing what is best and happiest for himself. This was admitted by Fielding. After relating Tom Jone's kindnes^ to the Miller family, he warned the reader not to imagin that his hero 'acted more disinterestedly than indeed he did.' He had, in fact, 'a very considerable interest' in the transactions.

He was never an indifferent spectator of the misery or happiness of anyone ; and he felt either the one or the other in greater proportion as he himself contributed to either. He could not, therefore, be the instrument of raising a whole family from the lowest state of wretchedness to the highest pitch of joy without conveying great felicity to

himself; more, perhaps, than worldly men often purchase to themselves by undergoing the most severe labour, and often by wading through the deepest iniquity.

"(*c*) Of Fielding's doctrine of the supreme value of 'good nature' or 'goodness of heart'—the terms are synonymous—something has already been said. According to his teaching, goodness of heart is the essential constituent of virtue. The meaning of the phrase, however, was misapprehended by some—in particular by Sir John Hawkins, who charged Fielding with seeking to substitute 'generous qualities' for 'virtue upon principle,' 'good affections' for 'moral obligation and a sense of duty.' But Fielding had certainly no idea of making a distinction between the morality of the good heart and the morality of principle. In his terminology good-heartedness signifies a great deal more than good natural instincts—'the virtue of a horse or a dog,' as Hawkins put it. It is altruism—the 'quality which is always busying itself without-doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the good of others as its own'; the 'kind and benevolent disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others'; the 'generosity of spirit, which is the sure foundation of all that is great and noble in human nature.' Between such good-heartedness and virtuous principle there is no contrariety. In *Tom Jones* the chief example of godness of heart is the philanthropic Allworthy. And, however, Allworthy may be criticized, it certainly cannot be alleged that he was lacking in principle and a sense of duty.

"Fielding's insistence on goodness of heart was evidently intended to correct the superficial notions of virtue which were current in his time. He knew that by many of his contemporaries virtue was identified with mere outward respectability. They were apt to pass a person as good, as soon as they had satisfied themselves 'that he lived like an honest man, owed no one a shilling, took nothing but what was his own, kept a good house, entertained his neighbours with a hearty welcome at his table, and was charitable to the poor.' They laid, in short, exaggerated stress on pious speech, seemly action, and decorous behaviour; oblivious of the fact that external propriety may be no more than a hypocritical affectation, and is not inconsistent with the process

of a thoroughly wicked and corrupt nature. Such shallow ideas of goodness called for correction ; and it was with the object of correcting them that Fielding insisted so strongly that goodness is an affair of the inner man, an affair of the heart. He illustrated his teaching by the example of Blifil. Outwordly Blifil was an irreproachable young man, godly in his talk, prudent in his behaviour—as good a young man as any conventional moralist could desire. But inwardly he was vile. He was completely selfish ; he was even, what is worse, malignant ; he was bad in the heart. And that being so, his apparent good conduct counted for nothing. It is not what a man does, but what he is, that makes him righteous ; and Blifil, with all his parade of virtue, was a villain.

"In this teaching on good-heartedness Fielding laid down an important principle. Goodness, he contended, depends not so much on a man's actions as on his motives and intentions ; not on the quality of his conduct, but on the quality of his character. It has to do with the inner nature, with what the man intrinsically is, with the state of the heart. This shifting of the accent from the outward to the inward is most interesting. Coleridge, who was an authority on ethical matters, declared that by 'no writer' was the 'momentous distinction' between character and conduct, between being and doing, 'so finely brought forward as by Fielding.'

"(*d*) While Fielding conceived goodness to lie in the agent rather than in the action, he did not, of course, regard action as of no importance. He was far from agreeing with the opinion of Mr. Square, who deemed all virtue to be 'matter of theory only.' He held that true virtue is always practical. A good being must needs express himself in corresponding action. But Fielding went even further than this ; for he was prepared to concede the conventional demand for an outward show of decorum and responsibility. The good man, he taught, must be not only good in heart, and not only good in action ; he must also take care to present to the world a good appearance. It is therefore his duty to exercise prudence in respect of all externals.

Prudence and circumspection (he declared) are necessary even to the best of men. They are indeed, as it were, a guard to virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your designs,

nay, that your actions, are intrinsically good ; you must take care they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or malice and envy will take care to blacken it so, that the sagacity and goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it, and to discern the beauties within. Let this, my young readers, be your constant maxim, that no man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the rules of prudence ; nor will virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum.

"While Fielding allowed that the errors due to imprudence are less heinous and less irretrievable than those which spring from villainy, yet he was convinced that more people are brought to ruin and disaster by the former than by the latter. Hence he took special pains to point out, and to illustrate in his story, the crucial importance of prudence in the conduct of life. To teach this lesson was, indeed, one of the avowed purposes of his novel.

I have endeavoured (he wrote) strongly to inculcate, that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion ; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. A moral which I have the more industriously laboured, as the teaching it is, of all others, the likeliest to be attended with success ; since, I believe, it is much easier to make good men wise, than to make bad men good.

"(*e*) In Fielding's time the question of the essential nature of man, and of its primary actuating principle, was being hotly debated by ethical theorists. The controversy centred in the conceptions of 'self-love' and 'benevolence'. Is self-love or benevolence man's predominating motive? Is he primarily an egoistic or an altruistic being? Or do the two principles co-exist in his constitution? Hobbes had maintained that self-love is man's fundamental characteristic ; and that all human action springs from this passion, which is apt to express itself as aggressive ambition, unrestrained by consideration for others or concern for the general good. On the other hand, the opponents of this theory—Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, and the rest—while they could not deny that self-love is an element in human nature, strongly repudiated the view that it is the only, or even the principal element. Their general contention was that there exist in man both self-regarding affections and social affections, and that the secret of right living is to preserve the two elements in reasonable equilibrium.

"In this controversy Fielding followed the lead of Shaftesbury. He believed that both self-love and benevolence are fundamental, congenital elements in the human constitution. To resolve everything into self-love alone seemed to him to be equivalent to a denial of the existence of virtue. Hence he emphatically repudiated the theory of Hobbes and his disciples, who some years since very much alarmed the world, by showing that there are no such things as virtue or goodness really existing in human nature.' He considered this doctrine to be a libel on humanity. For, though there are persons in whom the element of self-love is so exorbitantly developed as to render them consummately selfish and vicious, such examples are not common, and certainly do not warrant 'a persuasion of universal depravity.'

If there was, indeed, much more wickedness in the world than there it would not prove such general assertions against human nature, hence much of this arrives by mere accident, and many a man who commits evil is not totally bad and corrupt in his heart. In truth, none seems to have any title to assert human nature to be necessarily and universally evil, but those whose own minds afford them one instant of this natural depravity.

"In Fielding's view, then, normal human nature is compounded of both good and evil. And if, in this compound, the good elements preponderate, we ought not harshly to condemn the imperfections. Even in good people there must necessarily be faults and blemishes; and in respect of these, provided that they be not really heinous, a generous toleration—the 'over-looking disposition'—is recommended.

"It may be added that Fielding did not by any means condemn all self-love as evil. He held, on the contrary, that reasonable care for oneself is both natural and justifiable. A man may legitimately seek honours, riches, pleasures, and all manner of gratifications which are not in themselves objectionable, provided that he does so with moderation. He is required to be wisely temperate in satisfying his passions and appetites, but he need not be an ascetic. It is only when self-love grows inordinate, defies control, and dominates the mind to the invalidation or suppression of the beneficent altrustic element, that it becomes vicious.

"Fielding's teaching on morals, if not exactly 'exalted',

is eminently sound and sensible. He did not attempt to incite frail average men and women to aim at exceptional excellence. He was content if he could persuade them to regulate their lives in general accordance with the dictates of right and reason, and was prepared to make liberal allowance for the infirmities of natures which were in the main good and amiable. His ethics, in short, were those of a sagacious and kindly man of the world, who would not impose on the weaker brethren a stricter discipline than they could bear, yet would sanction no paltering with those fundamental moral laws on the observance of which depend both the happiness of the individual and the well-being of society. Boswell has fairly described the character of his instruction. 'The moral tendency' of Fielding's writings though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He who is as good as Fielding would make him as an amiable member of society."

4. Contrast and Antithesis in *Tom Jones*: In *Tom Jones* Fielding makes an ample use of contrast and antithesis. Referring to this Baker has observed in *A History of the English Novel*, Vol. IV :-"Both in general plan and in the smallest details, Fielding relied on the method of antithesis and contrast, whether to define his philosophic meaning or to bring out the latent comedy in what was going on. In *Tom Jones* the more representative figures fall into sets of contrasted pairs, though the opposition is disguised by the multitude and diversity of minor characters and the faults and imprudence of their betters. There is a subtle balancing of motives and moral peculiarities. The method is also seen at work in those turns of events that suddenly negative what seems inevitable, and likewise in such frequent instances of self-refutation as when Tom Jones vows the chastest constancy to his Sophia and the next instant falls an ignominious prey to the liquorish Molly.

"The most obvious contrast is that between those two inmates of Mr. Allworthy's household, representative of opposite schools of thought and morality, both equally objects of Fielding's satire, the philosopher Square and the irascible Parson Thwackum, tutor to Jones and Bilfil.

"All through the earlier chapters, the incessant squabbles of Thwackum and Square help to make clearer the intellectual position of the author. Square stands for abstract ethics, Thwackum for slavish and unenlightened respect for authority and reliance on the doctrine of salvation by faith. Thwackum is cruel, malicious, and selfish; but honestly believes himself a devout Christian and an infallible instructor of youth, though his precepts only furnish a pragmatical support for Blifil's sordid self-interest, and his blood-thirsty discipline only excites Tom's pugnacity.

"Square and Thwackum are both essential to Fielding's scheme. Neither pietistic dogma nor the cut-and-dried maxims of an abstract moral philosophy are of much avail without openness of disposition, generosity, and feeling for others. On the contrary, they are apt to breed hypocrisy. The ill-conditioned Thwackum remains Blifils' ally and Jones' bitter foe right to the end. Hoping to marry Sophia, and thus gratify both his own covetousness and his hatred for Tom Jones, Blifil 'availed himself of the piety of Thwackum, who held that if the end proposed was religious (as surely matrimony is) it mattered not how wicked were the means. As to other occasions, he used to apply the philosophy of Square, which taught that the end was immaterial, so that means were fair and consistent with moral rectitude. To say truth, there were few occurrences in life on which he could not draw advantage from precepts of one or other of these great masters.' It is by the instrumentality of Square, who becomes a Christian—not of Parson Thwackum's persuasion—before he dies—that Tom is righted in the esteem of Mr. Allworthy. Thwackum's bigotry and self-righteousness eventually deprive him of what he regards as his right, the favour and bounty of that great man.

"There are other traces of an intellectual scheme, other contrasts, that may have been the original factors in the equation as Fielding first envisaged the problem. The antithesis of Jones and Bilfil is fundamental, but it is strained to such a degree that Master Blifil becomes a mere puppet. Over against the man of good impulses, hasty but open to correction, whose nature is disciplined by bitter experience, it was necessary to

place his opposite, the mean, self-centred being, on whom the only effect of Square's and Thwackum's exercises in casuistry is to make his selfishness more calculating. A man may yield to his weaknesses, but must not become a slave to vice. If he yields, let him take the consequences cheerfully ; and if he shows regard for his fellows, much will be forgiven him. Let him acquire prudence and knowledge of will, whose snares are set for him on every side ; without such knowledge he will never prosper, or even be secure. But should he employ his worldly wisdom for base personal ends, and not as safeguard against the shortcomings of flesh, then will he become a hypocrite and a villain, and a clear-sighted girl-like Sophia will see through and detest him. It is a minor ill to miss the material reward held out to the virtuous by Richardson ; the penalty that matters is the loss of quiet conscience, and the contempt of those whose esteem is worth having. Such is the moral of the contrasted careers of Tom Jones and Blifil.

"The philanthropic Allworthy is an essential figure in the scheme, and there may have been from the outset an intention of contrasting him with Squire Western, the man of reason with the man of instinct – culture, philosophy, civilisation, with the natural man in his natural environments, the stupid, ignorant Tory Squire. Fielding himself declares that Allworthy, with his preternatural goodness, was meant to typify the virtues of three benevolent friends, Ralph Allen of Bath, the almost brotherly Lyttelton, and the munificent Duke of Bedford. Tradition has it that Allen was the true original of the portrait. He was the benefactor of Fielding and of several other literary men, whom he delighted to entertain at his new mansion of Prior Park, and assist if need were out of his colossal fortune......Pope wrote of his unobtrusive charities, not entirely to the satisfaction of the doer. But Allworthy is too much of a composite image of all the virtues to be a living person, and is handled with such deference that his mistakes of judgment do not come in for that measure of comic irony which is faithfully dealt out to every other person, not excluding the hero. Squire Western, on the other hand, as he gradually takes a larger part in the action, and among the numerous scenes in which he fumes and

blusters, or coos like any sucking dove at Sophia's caresses, there is not one to which his vitality and entirely unconscious humour do not give inexhaustible zest.

"Other contrasts that strike the eye are of a more accidental kind. Thus, in Miss Western, the prim feminism of the bluestocking regime is a foil to the she-libertine, Lady Bellaston, typifying the profligacy of a certain aristocratic set. But the most telling antithesis is between this 'perfect mistress of manners, customs, ceremonies, and fashions,' with her formidable literary and political erudition, and her brother, the gross, prejudiced and blundering Squire. These two never meet without some battle of temperaments that is infinitely amusing for the spectators.

"And the everlasting opposition between high people and low people, on which Fielding holds forth so wittily in *Joseph Andrews*, is never far out of sight in *Tom Jones*. In the course of his ups and downs, the hero continually slips out of one sphere into the other, and it is in the lower that his adventures provide the highest comedy. 'I will venture to say,' Fielding observes, 'the highest life is much the dullest, and affords very little humour or entertainment. The various callings in lower sphere produce the greater variety of humorous character; whereas here, except among the few who are engaged in the pursuit of ambition, and the fewer still who have a relish for pleasure, all is vanity and servile imitation. Dressing and cards, eating and drinking, bowing and courtseying, make up the business of their lives.' But in the introduction to the fourteenth book, when he lets fall these sage remarks, Fielding has Richardson in mind, who was one of the many English writers who 'have totally failed in describing the manner of upper life,' and 'in reality know nothing of it.' Richardson was further at fault in representing his persons of quality as vowed to the pursuit of erotic adventure. Lady Bellaston, as Fielding shows, stands for only a small class, those people of rank 'upon whom passion exercises its tyranny,' and who are distinguished by 'their noble intrepidity and a certain superior contempt of reputation.' The majority of women in her rank of life are taught by their mothers to despise the pleasures of love, and being

afterwards, by the care of such mothers, married without having husbands, they seem pretty well confirmed in the justness of those sentiments; whence they content themselves, for the dull remainder of life, with the pursuit of more innocent, but I am afraid more childish amusements. Folly rather than vice is the characteristic of the present beau monde, and the only epithet which it deserves is that of frivolous.'

"Closely allied to this balancing of characters or groups or classes of people is Fielding's favourite way of showing what a person, or an act or impulse, or a demonstration of feeling, is really worth by ironical apposition of contradictory facts—such as the inglorious overthrow of the enamoured Jones. The evidence for it is immediately followed by the counter-evidence, the climax by anti-climax. Western's anxious tenderness for Sophia, when he thinks that she and Blifil are going to make a match of it, his extravagant raptures and protests that she was his only joy on earth, are changed in an instant to oaths and threats when she tells him he is mistaken, and that to marry one she hates and detests would be worse than death.

"Is it not a parallel to Parson Adams, preaching resignation and then driven frantic by the report that his little boy is drowned; or denouncing vanity, and extolling his famous sermon on the subject? Not less comic is the discomfiture of the master of the puppet-show, who has been denouncing the idle trumpery (useless thing) and low stuff that merely make people laugh, and enlarging on the good and instructive lesson conveyed by his own entertainment, and is suddenly confounded by the scandalous behaviour of his merry-Andrew. The landlady accuses him of bringing in a parcel of puppets dressed up like lords and ladies, and turning the servants' said. 'I will tolerate no more such things. It is only the way to teach our servants idleness and nonsense: for to be sure nothing can be learned by such idle shows as these. I remember when puppet shows were made of good scripture stories, as Jephtha's Rash Vow, and such good things, and when wicked people were carried away by the devil. There was some sense in those matters, but as the parson told us last Sunday, nobody believes in the devils nowadays.'

"The ingenuity of fortune is always providing these ironical contrasts. In *Amelia* there is the scene where Booth is drinking and carousing and gaming his money away, whilst his wife at home goes without her half-pint of wine to save six pence. In the same spirit are the sharp transitions of mood in one and the same person, and the assurances and protests belying what that person really feels. Sophia, learning of Tom's intrigue with Mrs. Waters, and believing all she has been told of his bandying his own name about, tries to console herself with the conviction that he is only a low despicable wretch, and that she can easily subdue her affection for one who is beneath contempt. 'Yes, Honour', she cries to her waiting maid, 'I am now easy.' I am, indeed, I am very easy.' And then she bursts into a flood of tears.

"There is irony upon irony in the account of Miss Western's conceited perspicacity when she imparts to her brother the news that Sophia is in love with Blifil, and proceeds to assure the young lady that there is no need for concealment since her father and Squire Allworthy wish for nothing better than such an alliance, Sophia believing all the while that it is Tom Jones her aunt refers to. Her sagacity was so wonderful, 'no species of disguise or affectation had escaped her notice ; but as to the plain simple workings of honest nature, as she had never seen any such, she could know but little of them.' Squire Western is not so confident that Allworthy will be moved by worldly considerations : 'Money hath no effect o' un.' 'Brother', said the lady, 'your politics astonish me. Are you really imposed on by professions? Do you think Mr. Allworthy hath more contempt for money than other men, because he professes more? Such credulity would better become one of us weak women than that wise sex which Heaven hath formed for politicians.' Nevertheless, the lady is further at sea than her brother, whom she calls clown and blockhead, when he proves insensible to sarcasm.

"Sophia jumps to the conclusion that her aunt has detected her fondness for Jones, and tries to put her off the scene by showing the utmost sprightliness towards Blifil. The squire was delighted ; the aunt was not altogether so pleased.

For "Sophia so greatly overacted her part, that her aunt was at first staggered, and began to suspect some affectation in her niece ; but as she was herself a person of great art, so she soon attributed this to extreme art in Sophia. She tackles the coy maiden herself. 'Did you think, child, beacuse you have been able to impose upon your father, that you could impose upon me? Do you imagine I did not know the reason of your overacting all that friendship of Mr. Blifil yesterday? I have seen a little too much of the world, to be so deceived. Nay, any, do not blush again. I tell you it is a passion you need not be ashamed of.' So she dexterously wheedles a frank avowal out of Sophia, and to their mutual consternation the lynx-eyed aunt finds that her niece meant Jones, and the niece that her aunt meant Blifil. The thrice-refined irony of these miscontructions reminds us that a dozen years ago the author had been adapting Moliere to the English stage.

"Of like nature at bottom are the dramatic ironies of many other incidents, paradoxical situations, misunderstandings, mental somersaults. By exposing self-contradictions and self-pretences and in all manner of ways confronting appearances with the reality, Fielding makes us see what his people are actually thinking and feeling and doing, and the reason, usually not apparent even to themselves, why they do that and not something else. This ironical attitude is of the very essence of his art which presupposes a complete mastery over his characters and their interrelations."

5. A General Estimate of *Tom Jones*: Giving an estimate of *Tom Jones*, Kettle has observed in *An Introduction to the English Novel* : "What strikes one most, perhaps, returning to this novel, is how very tentative and experimental a book it is. In spite of all the apparent self-confidence, the easy handling of his puppet-master role and the great expertness in plot-construction, Fielding is for ever feeling his way, moving from one plane of narrative to another, tentatively exploring the possibilities of his *milieu*.

"The immediate impression is the opposite of tentative. Fielding appears to be very much in control of the situation. The plot, as numerous critics have pointed out, is worked out with the greatest skill ; it is the job, indeed, of the successful

professional dramatist Fielding had been. Even more basic to the impression of assuredness is the nature of Fielding's philosophy, sceptical but optimistic. He takes the world in his stride, always curious, frequently indignant, but never incurably hurt. It is not, in the academic sense, a philosophy at all, certainly not a conscious metaphysical system. Rather it is an attitude of mind, an acceptance of certain standards and approaches. Fielding, like most of the writers of the eighteenth century, is very sure of his world. He is not complacent but he is fundamentally confident—confident that the problems of human society, that is to say *his* society, can and will be solved by humane feeling and right reason. It is this broad and tolerant confidence which gives *Tom Jones* its particular tone and which also (one suspects) alienates those critics who feel less confidence in social man than Fielding, whose optimism they mistake for insensitiveness.

"The tentative note can be isolated as emerging from Fielding's constant preoccupation with method. How best to gain the reader's interest ? How to project a character on to the page ? How to achieve any kind of suspense without either playing a trick on the reader or forfeiting his own position as omniscent puppet master ? He is constantly finding that the contrivance of his plot does violence to the characters he has created. The truth is that in *Tom Jones* there is too much plot. Scenes take place which do not arise inevitably from character and motive. And the charaters themselves are not, in the fullest sense, people. They are almost all 'flat' characters in the tradition of the comedy of humours, that useful though unsubtle theory based on the crude physiological psychology of the Middle Ages. The very language of the 'humours' tradition lingers on. Tom Jones's 'complexion' is referred to when his amorous exploits are under discussion. Mr. Allowrthy's name betrays the manner of his conception.

"The point, here, is not that the 'humours' tradition is invalid but that it does not quite square with the larger claims of Fielding to present a true and realistic picture of 'human nature'. There is any amount of 'life' in *Tom Jones*,

but it is not presented with any kind of consistency of convention. Some episodes are fully dramatic, developing through and out of their own internal potentialities, like the scene in which Sophia finds Tom in Lady Bellaston's room; others, like the muddles in the inn, are simply contrivances with no point beyond the exploitation of the farcical moment; others again, like Molly Seagrim's fracas (noisy quarrel) in the churchyard, are realistic narrative which make up the larger panorama, but in which the reader is not at all closely involved. The characters too, are conceived on various planes. Allworthy is almost an allegorical figure, scarcely individualized at all; Square and Thwackum are like ninepins, put up in order to be knocked down; Mrs. Blifil is a realistic character, essentially a type, not presented in the round, but subtly observed; Tom himself and Squire Western are unsubtle but fully rounded figures; Partridge is a great deal larger than life, a creation conceived and introduced almost in terms of the later music hall.

"And yet for all this the novel has a unity and a pattern, which is something beyond the artificial unity of its carefully contrived but entirely non-symbolic plot.

Tom Jones is a panoramic commentary on England in 1745, and it is also the story of Tom Jones and Sophia Western. And what engages our sympathy in that story is (oddly enough, one might suppose, for the two books are otherwise quite dissimilar), just what engages our sympathy on behalf of Clarissa. Tom and Sophia, like Clarissa, are rebels, revolting against the respectably accepted domestic standards of eighteenth-century society. By such standards Sophia should obey her father and Tom should be, what Blifil thinks him, an illegitimate upstart who ought to be put firmly in his place.

"Now it is true that, for the purposes of the plot (and to placate conventional taste) Fielding makes Tom a gentleman after all; but that is not really important. What does matter, because the whole movement and texture of the book depend on it, is that Tom and Sophia fight conventional society, embodied in the character of Blifil. They fight with

every strategem, including, when necessary, fists and swords and pistols. Unlike Clarissa, they are not passive in their struggle, and that is why *Tom Jones* is not a tragedy but comedy. It is not the conventionally contrived happy ending but the confidence we feel throughout the book that Tom and Sophia can and will grapple with their situation and change it that gains our acceptance of Fielding's comic view of life. It is, of course, no real contradiction that the same reader is convinced by the comedy of *Tom Jones*. Tragedy and comedy, even in the same situation, are not mutually exclusive.

"The struggle of Tom and Sophia against Blifil and all that he stands for is at the very centre of the novel. It is neither Allworthy, whose standards are shown to be wanting but who is genuinely deceived, nor the superbly presented old idiot, Squire Western, who is the villain of *Tom Jones*, but Blifil. Indeed, it is the particular weakness of both Allworthy and Western that they are taken in by Blifil, whom they accept at his face value. Blifil, 'sober, discreet and pious,' is in fact treacherous, lecherous, hypocritical and entirely self-seeking. From the moment he betrays Black George, whom Tom has protected with an admirable lie, we know what Blifil is like. He is for ever on the side of conventional respectability, the friend (significantly) of both Squire and Thwackum, despite their mutual (and logical) incompatibility. And when his fell schemes—centring as they do upon the orthodox ruling class concern with property and a 'good' marriage—are defeated, Fielding's description of him is significant :

> 'He cast himself on his bed, where he lay abandoning himself to despair, and drowned in tears ; not in such tears as flow from contrition, and wash away guilt from minds which have been seduced or surprised into it unawares, against the bent of their dispositions, as will sometimes happen from human frailty, even to the good ; no, these tears were such as the frighted thief sheds in his cart, and are indeed the effect of that concern which the most savage natures are seldom deficient in feeling for themselves.'

"Inevitably our minds are carried back to *Jonathan Wild*, and it is not by a casual stroke. It is relevant to recall that

the weakness of *Jonathan Wild* lies in Heartfree ; the strength of *Tom Jones* lies to a high degree in Tom. For Tom, unlike Heartfree, is able to carry the positive values of Fielding's world. Unlike Heartfree, he is not afraid to fight, if necessary to tell lies. He has all the vigour and spirit that Heartfree lacks. In him Fielding's positives—the values of the open heart—become more concrete and more fully realized. In Tom the prevailing positive is spontaneity; he acts 'naturally' and therefore the excesses into which his animal spirits lead him are forgiven. There is an interesting link here with that recurring eighteenth-century figure, the noble savage (glimpsed by Mrs. Heartfree in Africa), a personage who becomes in time (Mrs. Inchbald's *Nature and Art* is a link here) the 'natural man' of Rousseau and the Romantics.

"The 'natural man' (descending from a 'golden age') and the 'noble savage' are of course sentimental idealizations, but they play nevertheless an important part in the struggle of eighteenth-century man to free himself from the limitation of mechanical materialism and the consequences of class society. They are vigorous concepts because they oppose the static world-view of the eighteenth-century ruling class. Their strength lies in their revolutionary assertion of the capacity of human nature to change itself and the world ; their weakness lies in the idealist nature of that assertion.

"Now the strengths and weaknesses of Fielding's conception of Tom Jones have precisely these same qualities. The strength lies in the vigour and spontaneity of Tom's reactions; the weakness in the element of idealism implicit in Fielding's simple confidence in the values of the heart. After all, is not Tom just a little too ready to wash his hands of Molly Seagrim and does not the inadequacy here spring from an unwillingness to evaluate the morality of spontaneity within the bounds of a particular social situation? More important, can one happy marriage really justify a world in which the Blifils rule the roost? Are the weapons of Tom and Sophia weapons enough ?

"It is, nevertheless, the central story of Tom and Sophia that best expresses in concrete form the view of life which

Fielding is concerned to encompass in his novel (or, perhaps one should say that it is from the effect on us of the story of Tom and Sophia that we are best able to judge the nature and validity of Fielding's view of life). Yet we do not get very close to Tom and Sophia. Fielding deliberately keeps them at a distance. The ironical opening description of Sophia is really a way of *not* describing her. And later in the novel Fielding writes of his heroine :

'As to the present situation of her mind, I shall adhere to a rule of Horace, by not attempting to describe it, from despair of success. Most of my readers will suggest it easily to themselves ; and the few who cannot, would understand the picture, or at least would deny it to be natural, if ever so well drawn.

"Now this deliberate refusal to bring us really close to his characters, so that all the time he tends to describe rather than convey a situation, cannot just be dismissed as a failure in Fielding's art. On the contrary it is essential to his comic method. He asks that the reader should survey life rather than experience it. And so he tends always to approach the particular situation through the general comment. Hence the quality of his style, brimming with abstract nouns which generalize the narrative, remove the particular emotion to a distance and yet—because Fielding's own social attitudes (and therefore his language) are so secure and confident—evoke a response remarkably precise and controlled though not, of course, intimate. It is with English society at large, not with the precise quality of feeling of individual characters, that he is primarily concerned. And between this large panorama, this general interest, and ourselves Fielding himself stands (larger, more insistent than any of his creations) directing our attention, controlling our reactions, imposing the pattern. Henry James, of all novelists perhaps the furthest removed from Fielding in method and outlook, has admirably made the essential point :

'It is very true that Fielding's hero in *Tom Jones* is but as 'finely', that is as intimately, bewildered as a young man of great health and spirits may be when he hasn't a grain of imagination : the ›
made is, at all events, that his sense of bewilderment obtains altogether on the comic, never on the tragic plane. He has so much life' that it

amounts, for the effect of comedy and application of satire, almost to his having a mind, that is to his having reactions and a full consciousness; besides which his author—*he* handsomely possessed of a mind—has such an amplitude of reflection for him and round him that we see him through the mellow air of Fielding's fine old moralism, fine old humour and fine old style, which somehow really enlarge, make everyone and everything important."

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CHAPTER XV

GENERAL ESTIMATE

1. Fielding Realism : Realism is the key note of Fielding's works. He had a deep interest in presenting the life of his times. His prime interest was in depicting every-day life of the ordinary man and he brought in his novels a striking picture of his own times. Unlike Richardson, he had no heroes, and few out-and-out' villains—his characters are men, with all men's weaknesses, and the range of his portrait gallery has not often been exceeded. His work has a masculinity of tone quite different from the relative bloodlessness of Richardson's.

Fielding chose to laugh at the ills of life rather than shed tears over them. As we read his novels, a vast panorama of English social life comes before our eyes. His novels bring before us cruel laws, bitter-persecution of innocent people, numerous ills abounding everywhere both in the countryside, and in the urban surroundings. The highways and byways of life are represented in his works. We come across rogues and scoundrels, but also good people like Adams, Allworthy, Sophia and Amelia. Thus the chief interest in Fielding's works lies in the presentation of the pictures of life. His presentation of life is comprehensive in its sweep and range. A whole vision of English life comes up before the eyes of the reader, astounding in its richness and variety. Here we adventure on the high roads of England, stay at wayside inns where amazing incidents happen; we travel to the towns and meet 'society,' we find ourselves among the lowliest of the low ; we experience all the wealth and splendour of the English countryside. Strange adventures befall us here: we are way laid and robbed, beaten and bludgeoned and villains try to rob women of their wealth and virtue. It is a world of breathless activity, prodigal of adventure and incident.

The life depicted by Fielding in his novels is contemporaneous English life. The scene in his novels is the english scene. Scott draws attention to this aspect of his work repeatedly, saying: "The persons of the story live in England, travel in England, quarrel and fight in England." Raleigh pays a rich tribute to the genius and art of Fielding while drawing attention to the English quality of his work: "Fielding's novels are, in generai, thoroughly his own; and they are thoughly English. What they are most remarkable for, is neither sentiment, nor imagination, nor wit, nor even humour, though there is an immense deal of this last quality; but profound knowledge of human nature, at least of English nature, and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing......As a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare, though without any of the genius and poetical qualities of his mind."

The novels of Fielding are choric in character. They are essentially novels of character. The main aim of Fielding is to present the social panorama through his characters. In this respect, he continues, to a certain extent, the tradition of the picaresque novels. But he does not deal with the lower life alone. He sees life steadily and sees it whole and presents it as such.

2. His Satiric humour and ironical treatment: Fielding's humour is boisterous and broad to the point of coarseness. Richardson introduced the note of sentiment. It was left for Henry Fielding to impart the note of humour, irony and satire. W. J. Long remarks, "Unlike Richardson, who has no humour, who minces words and moralizes, and dotes on the sentimental woes of his heroines, Fielding is direct, vigorous, hilarious and course to the point of vulgarity. He is full of animal spirits, and he tells the story of a vagabond life, not for the sake of moralising like Richardson, or for emphasizing a forced repentance, like Defoe, but simply because it interests him, and his only concern is to laugh men out of their follies." Fielding's full blooded humour is shown in his two words Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. Now where this humour of Fielding is pleasantly expressed

than in the picture of loveable person—Adams. In the last work the powers of satire are keenly displayed. In Jonathan Wild and Amelia, the spirit of satire and irony comes forward and the novelist lashes at the weaknesses of his own times.

Inspite of the note of irony and satire, Fielding's humour has the roots of genially about it ; unlike Swift's it is sunny, kindly, and for all its keenness never barbed with poison. Church remarks, "It is no exaggeration to claim that Fielding is one of the greatest ironists in European literature. He is so much greater than Swift because he is healthy and normal, whereas Swift went about the world with a fleak of boam upon his lips.

3. **His Commonsense Morality :** Fielding set against the cloying sentimentality brought into vogue by Richardson's Pameia. In Joseph Andrews he burlesqued this mawkish ideal, giving us in Abraham Adam a picture of the genuine sentiment for which he cared. His object was to replace a morbid sentiment by a healthy commonsense morality. His morality does not strike a high note, it is largely prudential one. But it would be unjust to call Fielding an immoral novelist. Elizabeth Jenkins remarks, "Every century has its own peculiar distortions, the twentieth no less than the eighteenth, but our sympathies in sexual matters are much nearer to Fielding's than were many of his contemporaries." Pelham Edgar also supports this view. He remarks, "I can only answer that if Fielding is an immoral writer, our sentence of excommunication must be extended to embrace the reputations of many writers of genius who have profoundly influenced the course of the world thought. To sum up, "Both Fielding and Richardson were moralists and used the novel in order to demonstrate by actual examples what they considered right and wrong behaviour. But their conceptions of morals were poles apart ; indeed, each thought the works of the other anything but moral. Certainly the morality of Pamela was offensive to Fielding. For Fielding at the heart of right morals lay what he called 'good nature'. This he defined as, a delight in the happiness of mankind 'and a concern at their misery, with a desire, as much as

possible, to procure the former and avert the latter; and this with a constant regard to desert'. Again he wrote: 'I do not know a better general definition of virtue, than that it is a delight in doing good'. For Fielding morals were essentially positive; he lays the stress all the time on action, on doing; the keynote to his code is generosity. Generosity, however, is not a characteristic of Pamela in Richardson's novel: a servant girl, she is pursued and persecuted by her employer, the Squire, Mr. B., whose intentions, as she knows, are dishonourable. She is not to be shaken in her virtue, but when Mr. B. proposes marriage to her she accepts him immediately: virtue has brought its reward."

4. Plot Construction : Fielding was as superb a craftsman in his own way as Henry James. Though the plots of the plays were ill-constructed, yet his plots of the novels were excellent. The workmanship of his plot construction was incomparable. The incidents are admirably combined into a perfect pattern, and though the modern reader feels sometimes bored by his garrulity, irrelevance and looseness of texture; but considered from the standards of his own times his plots were supposed to be remarkably well done. The main points in his construction are the following:

(a) *His architectonic quality*—Fielding acted upon Aristotle's conception of a 'fable', from which nothing can be taken away without damage. His masterpiece *Tom Jones* has remarkable architectonic quality. Referring to his novel, Walter Allen remarks: "The new element in *Tom Jones* is Fielding's architectonic quality; no plot has ever carried through with more consummate skill, and the skill can be truly appreciated only after the book has been closed. In reading, one is delighted with the swiftness of the narration, to the economy, the nimble and inexhaustible invention. Fielding had learnt much from his experience in the theatre, especially how to break up the narrative, set his scene in a minimum of words, and carry on the action in short, and swift passages of dialogue. But it is only after reading that we realize how every detail has its place in action, is a preparation for what is to come, the full significance of which cannot be apparent until the novel has reached its end; then what seemed at first glance a happy stroke of invention reveals itself as part of the essential structure of the book,

without which the whole could not exist. Fielding was as superb a craftsman in his own way as Henry James. There is only one blot on the novel judged as a formal whole, the introduction of the extraneous story of the Man of the Hill, and even that can plausibly, if not convincingly be justified."

(*b*) *Coherent Structure* : Fielding's plots are highly coherent. They show the unique faculty of arranging a probable and interesting course of action in a planned and well-knit manner. According to Coleridge, there were three perfect plots in the world those of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *The Alchemist and Tom Jones*. Though his first novel Joseph Andrews is not well-constructed, yet it is told with a strongly developed narrative skill. His last novel Amelia reveals a falling off in, what we think of, as Fielding's characteristic genius in plot construction. In spite of this plot this novel follows a definite track of its own. Commenting on Fielding's well-knit and well designed plots, Edwin Muir remarks: "The plot of Tom Jones is an adroitly constructed frame-work for a picture of life, rather than on unfolding action. The incidents accurately timed ; they come in just where they should to suit the scheme of the book; but they are never inevitable, we do not see in them the logic of action, but an exquisitely orderly mind arranging everything for its own purpose."

(*c*) *The Principles of dramatic action* : Fielding constructed his plots according to the principles of dramatic action, The ending of the novels remind us of the last act of a well-knit comedy.

(*d*) *The narrative power of his plots* : Fielding is breezy, bustling and energetic in his narrative. He shows us life on the highway, in the cottage, and among the streets of London. Coleridge truly said that to take up Fielding after Richardson is like emerging from the sick-room on to the open lawn.

(*e*) *Three types of plot construction* : This plot construction is a combination of three types, i.e., Picaresque, epical and dramatic. In *Joseph Andrews* and *Jonathan Wild* the picaresque elements are predominant. But there is the combination of the epical and dramatic elements in his masterpiece *Tom Jones*.

(*f*) *Drawbacks of his plot construction* : Fielding has certain drawbacks in his construction of plots. First, he has introduced certain independent stories and episodes which have no connection with real conception of the novel. For example in the story of *Unfortunate Jilt*, Leonara is quite irrelevant as Mr. Wilson. The main character of this story has no actual connection with the plot of *Joseph Andrews.* The same is the case with story of *Man of the Hill* introduced in *Tom Jones*.. Secondly, there are foreign elements in his novels, which are noted in the picaresque novels of Spain. "His heroes and heroines are always on the road; they pursue each other in coaches and postchaises; they slip in long conversations and are only too easily tempted into irrelevant autobiographies." Finally, Fielding introduced sermons for the sake of social criticism. These sermons do not disturb the plot of Fielding's novel.

(g) *Fielding's characterization :* Fielding's great strength lies in his characterization. He was a great creater of master characters and he has left behind a whole galaxy of characters, the more memorable being Parson Adams, Mrs. Slipslop Jonathan Wild, Tom Jones, Blifil, Squire Allworthy, Squire Western, Sophia, Partridge, Booth and Amelia.

Like Shakespeare, Fielding could observe life with great detachment. He depicted his characters with perfect impartiality and objectivity. In his characterization there was charity and catholicity. Richard Church remarks: "It is that spirit of all pervading charity, expressing itself in a genial but vigorous compassion, which enabled Fielding to bring to the novel, for the first time, completely dispassionate observing mind. The result was the appearance in fiction of real human beings, in light and shadow, in weakness and strength, acting and thinking and feeling as you and I and all other flesh and blood mortals behave during our life—long conflict with the spirit that inhabits us. We are sinners, we are saints; and usually we are a neutral emulsion of the two. So are Tom Jones, and his lady Sophia and Squire Allworthy and the rest of them, people who have commanded the interest of millions of readers, and professional raise, through imitation, of all those hosts of writers who have come after him.

Scott, Hazlitt, Lamb, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Dickens and Thackeray, George Eliot and Meredith these are a few of the great figures in literature who are debtors."

The following are the chief traits of his characterzation:

(*a*) *Round characters* : Fielding characters are round rather than flat. Fielding remarked, "I describe not men, but manners, not an individual but species" Fielding describes the species in terms of the individuals.

(*b*) *Life like and real characters*: Another quality of Fielding's characters is that they are life-like and real. Regarding this feature of his characters, Elizabeth Jenkins wisely says: "Where so much is given to the reader, it is scarcely possible to say what is the most remarkable of Fielding's many powers ; but one at least, of these, and it is the more striking because he is a writer who works on a crowded caravan, is that all his characters inhabit the same plan of reality. Dicken, his great heir, is in some respects greater than he, but here Dicken falls short of him."

(*c*) *Experience of the World* : Another source of the vitality of Fielding's characters is the element in which they live. Fielding knows everything there is to know about his charncters even though he does not tell us all. They are so real to him that, even though he may give us no more than a glimpse of them, they become real for us. Behind every simple statement of Fielding's we feel the force of a deep and varied experience of life, an experience that, however bitter as it may have been, has not darkened the essential humanity of his nature.

(*d*) *Dramatic methods in depicting his characters*: "But it is not by mere description, it is by making his characters speak and act that he puts them before us; and here Fielding has a knack of making them bare their inmost selves, expose their essential traits in the first few syllables uttered. The character drawing, in short, is in the dialogue itself albeit that dialogue is always shapely literature. Trulliber, for example makes but a brief appearance, and never turns up again, yet the man is stamped on the memory, once for all. Adams had gone to this brother Parson to borrow fourteen

shillings, to enable him to pay the innkeeper's bill, and is taken by that worthy for a customer for Trulliber farms his glebe and is famous at rearing swine."

(e) *His characters form a complete picture of human life* : The characters of Fielding give the vivid and graphic picture of the society of the eighteenth century. In addit.on to the characters of the upper classes, he has taken the characters from low life as well. From the undistinguished mob, Fielding selects a Trulliber, a Peter Pounce, Beau Didapper, the Tow-wouses, Mrs. Slipslop, and a few others, as specimens worth a little closer attention. One and all, with the exception of Lady Booby—who is there less on her own account than start the clockwork and send Joseph and the rest on their travels they belong to the category of low people. Fielding held that "the highest life is much the dullest and afford very little humour or entertainment." In this respect, his novels are essentially epical in character since one of the chief aims of an epic is to present a complete picture of contemporary life in its wide and varied aspects.

(*f*) *Typical English men and women*: Fielding's characters are typical English men and women of the eighteenth century, who represent the good nature and good humour of the English people. Scott says, "The persons of the story live in England, travel in England; quarrel and fight in England; and scarce an incident occurs, with it being marked by something which could not well have happened in any other country." But Fielding did not ignore totally the evil characters whom we find intermixed with the rest. Since Chaucer was alive and hale, no such company of pilgrims—Poachers. Mooly Seagrims, adventures and parson supples—had appeared on the English roads.

(g) *Fielding's excellence in male portraiture* : In this respect Fielding was just the opposite of Richardson, whose female characters are better drawn than his male characters. Fielding, like Meredith, excels in the characterization of male characters. His male characters are more distinct individuals than women. Fielding's Sophia and Amelia are quite

insignificant when they are contrasted with Pamela and Clarissa of Richardson.

(*h*) *Narrative* : Fielding is breezy, bustling and energetic in his narrative. He shows us life on the highway, in the cottage and among the streets of London. Coleridge truly said that to take up Fielding after Richardson is like emerging from the sick-room on to the open lawn.

(*i*) *Style* : A word must be given to his style. He breaks away from the mannered, artificial style of the earlier novelists, and gives us the good 'hodden grey' of his own period. His style has a slight touch of archaism in the use of words like 'hath', but generally it is fresh and clear. His use of dialogue and conversation is of a similar nature.

(*j*) *Fielding's influence*: Fielding exercised a deep and abiding influence on the novelists of the subsequent generations. Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen were close disciples of Fielding. Maria Edgeworth considered herself a Richardsonian and "was in truth such in her didactic hours, but when she let her genius have its own way it speedily led her into the region opened up by Fielding. Jane Austen, with perhaps the sole exception of Meredith, inspite of her narrower scope is Fielding's closest parallel in English fiction." Sir Walter Scott derived his inspiration from Fielding in the faithful portraiture of the life he knew and in the comic delineation of his best characters. Dickens recognized the great influence of Fielding in his portraiture of Pecksniff and chadband and in his satirical thrusts at the foibles of his time. George Eliot and Meredith declared in unequivocal terms the supermacy of Fielding "Meredith was an inheritor of Fielding's art and his *Essay on Comedy* is a hand book to the comedy of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones.*

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UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS

1. Parson Adam is "compact of the oddest contradictions, the most diverting eccentricities". Discuss.

Or

2. Critics have noted the "excessive influence of stagecraft on Fielding's art". His art lies not in puppet-like manipulations of his characters but in their psychology. Comment on the above opinions with special reference to his novel *Joseph Andrews*. (P.U. Previous 1964)

3. Contrast Fielding's "Rugged realism with Stern's sentimentalism". Illustrate both by specific citations.

Or

4. "I describe not men, but manners, not an individual but species", said Fielding. How much of this statement is true in regard to his characters in *Joseph Andrews*? (P.U. Final 1964)

5. "Like *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones* is the precursor of a new order of things—the earliest and freshest expression of a new departure in art". Discuss.

Or

6. "We are asked to recognize that Tom, in spite of some lack of prudence and circumspection and in spite of some contraventions of the moral code, is essentially a good man". How far is it possible to call Tom a good man notwithstanding his moral weakness? (P.U. Old 1964)

7. "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a Man" (Thackeray). Describe the chief features of the novels of Fielding on the basis of which this remark was made.

Or

8. "Fielding is openly the corrector of the manners and morals of his age, but his authority to be so is all the greater because he can create a figure like Tom Jones, drawn with such fidelity to all-too-human nature". Discuss.

(P.U. Old Course 1965)

9. "Fielding's characters portray themselves......It is not by mere description it is by making his characters speak and act that be puts them before us". Discuss with special reference to Parson Adams.

Or

10. Discuss Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* as "a comic epic in prose" (P.U. Previous 1965)

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